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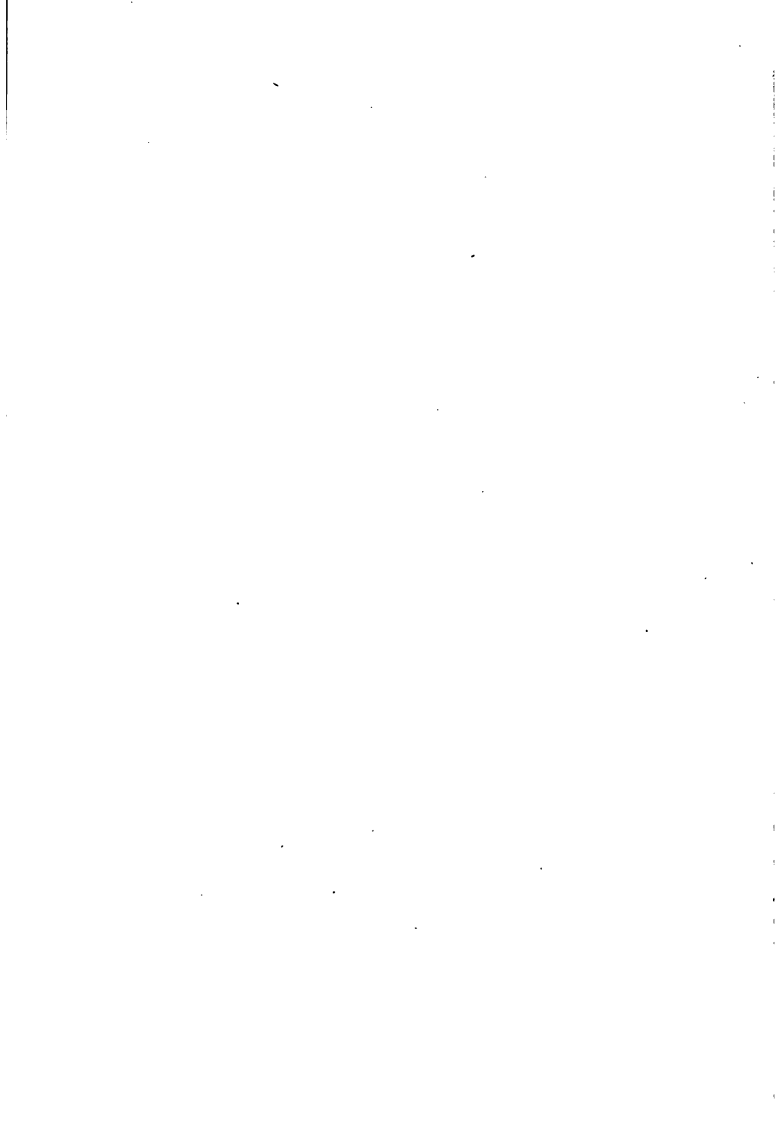
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**SPIRITUAL STUDIES IN
ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL**

SPIRITUAL STUDIES

— IN —

ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL

BY THE

REV. ARTHUR RITCHIE, D.D.

Rector of St. Ignatius' Church, New York City

An entirely new work, on a larger and, it is hoped, more helpful plan, than the Author's original Studies in this Gospel.

To be issued, please God, in seven small volumes.

VOLUME I.

CHAPTERS I—IV.

MILWAUKEE

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PREFACE.

Twenty-five years ago, the author of this book began the publication of his *Spiritual Studies in St. John's Gospel*, intending them to be very brief devotional commentaries for workaday Christians on our Lord's words. His experience with *St. John's Gospel*, which appeared eventually in five small volumes, taught him that it was impossible to do any justice to matter so profound in such brief and sketchy treatment of it. Therefore in taking up our Lord's words in *St. Matthew*, the exposition was given in more detail, and the devotional thoughts expanded. After finishing *St. Matthew*, when *St. Luke* was begun, the same line of further exposition and detailed spiritual application was followed. Then it seemed wise to go back once more to *St. John*, and in a new set of studies to try to do more justice to the Master's heavenly teachings therein. The out-

come has been the preparation of matter for seven small volumes, of which this is the first, and it is hoped the rest may follow it in good time.

That the divine Lord may accept the humble work of His servant, and make it edifying to such as shall use it, is the prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

SPIRITUAL STUDIES IN ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

I.

"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour."—St. John i. 35-39.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams says: "He turned to them, for on those whom He knows to be following Him, He ever turns the light of His gracious countenance; and He makes it their own request, by saying, *What seek ye?* For it is He that hath said, *Seek, and ye shall find.* As with the Canaanitish woman, as with the blind Bartimæus, as with the two disciples at Emmaus, as when He was walking by on the

waters, He leads them first to ask, in order that He may bestow; as the father called not first his prodigal son, but when he came toward him, he hastened to meet him. 'Hereby are we instructed,' says St. Chrysostom, 'that He doth not anticipate our wills by His gifts; but when we begin, and set forth the will, then He Himself affords occasions of salvation.'

"He Himself indeed walketh in our hearts and asketh, not that He may know, but that He may draw out our desires after Him. They ask, not to be instructed by Him in the way where they now were, but ask for His abode, which is, says St. Cyril, the Church, in which He abides. And He tells them not, but bids them, *Come and see*, for obedience is the way to His abode; and their obedience is instant, for *they came and saw*. So also of His abode, which is in heaven; the first movement of grace is the heart which saith, *Lord, where dwellest Thou?* And His reply ever hath been, *Come and see. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also.*

"He is Himself the way, for He is our obedience; and He also is the end, for He is Himself our abode and rest; and we must know by experience that He is so; we must *come & see. And they abode with Him that day,*

which was, indeed, as the words seem to indicate, nearly a whole day, *for it was about the tenth hour*; or, as we conclude, ten o'clock in the morning; not as St. Chrysostom and other writers suppose, toward the close of the day, and at sunset, which the 'tenth hour' would be in the other three Evangelists.

"But St. Augustine speaks mystically, that ten is the number of the commandments which are now fulfilled in the new law of love. At all events, they stay long with Him; as, on the other occasion when John sent two disciples to Christ, they continued with Him a sufficient time to behold His miraculous works, so now do these, long enough to learn of themselves from His heavenly discourses; wherein He perhaps opened to them their own hearts and lives, and manifested Himself as healing their sins and bearing their infirmities, in the light in which they came to Him especially as the Lamb of God. 'How blessed,' exclaims St. Augustine, 'the day passed, how blessed the night! Who is it that shall tell us what things they heard of the Lord? Let us also ourselves build and make a dwelling-place in our hearts, whither He may come and instruct us, and converse with us.'"

And Alcuin: "The request being so good

a one, Christ promises a free and full disclosure. He saith unto them, *Come and see*; that is to say, My dwelling is not to be understood by words, but by works; *come*, therefore, by believing and working, and then *see* by understanding."

Stier points out that, "We must first in some degree know, by the revelation of the ground of our hearts, through the face of the Searcher of hearts turned full upon us, and be taught by the question which He asks, what it is that we as men and sinners seek and need: then shall we more and more discover that it is only Himself whom we seek, because in Him all one seeks is found. . . . He said unto them, *Come and see*. If that first word might have been construed by one who was excessively timid, or one who was insincere, into a repulse, this second comes with its immediate tone of permission and friendly acceptance—Ye are welcome to me; but its deepest tone is much more than merely permission. He who has come speaks in gracious invitation, and with the gentle command of love: *Come*, and we catch here already the keynote of His preaching and doctrine. Behold, the Baptist had said; and now they shall behold."

First Thought.—To those first disciples the

Master said very graciously, What seek ye? They could not well have answered, for they hardly knew as yet. There was a great desire for Him growing up in their hearts, which they did not fully understand. Therefore, He very gently and patiently led them on. We do know what He is, and our relation to Him; we know what we seek; nevertheless, it is well for us to stop every little while and bring the truth of the matter clearly before us. What seek ye, in following the Lord? We would reply, We seek eternal life. That is true of our higher nature, our better selves in our better moments. It is most true, also, that very often we are only seeking this world's things, that we may here live comfortably and happily. We are constantly making our plans, and dreaming our dreams, with regard to the few days which yet remain to us here below. We know better than that. We know that it is all important that we seek God's will. That which should be our supreme concern is to be good disciples, that we may be accepted as His disciples by the Master. Our daily thought should be, not of receiving, but of giving; not of what we can get for ourselves by faithful discipleship, but what we can do for Him.

How can we glorify Him? In His Church,

making its services stately and full of devotion ; in the persons of His servants, our fellow men who are in need—and in ministering to them we know that we minister to Him ; in our own inner lives, seeking daily to become more pure, more Christ-like, through the operation of His grace in us. It is so easy to forget the necessity of keeping these ends of the Christian life in view. Therefore it is good often to hearken to His inquiry, What seek ye?

Second Thought.—We have long ago been taught of His dwelling place. We have no need to ask, as did the two disciples that day, Master, where dwellest Thou? And yet it is always a most profitable thing to call to mind what we know of the divine habitation, for thither He invites us.

1. King Solomon spoke of heaven as God's dwelling place. The Master Himself called that blissful country His Father's house, and assured His followers that therein were many mansions; furthermore, that He was going there to prepare a place for them. There is great inspiration for us all in the thought that heaven is our Master's dwelling place, for He said, "Where I am there shall also my servant be." There is superb hope in our discipleship.

2. His heavenly palace, moreover, has an

outer court to which access may be had here upon earth, when He is pleased to have angelic hands draw aside the curtains which veil it. There He gives daily audience to His subjects. It is His altar throne. Before it we are called upon to prove the reality of our discipleship, by the manner of our worshipping, by the charity which we show towards our fellows, by our zeal for our souls' cleansing.

3. There is a more secret shrine still, into which He loves to enter from His altar throne: the recesses of the devout heart, the "ivory palaces," of which the psalmist speaks. "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Rabbi, where dwellest Thou? In heaven, of a surety; upon earth, in Thy sanctuary. Dost Thou also dwell in my heart?

Third Thought.—The Master is ever bidding us discover for ourselves where His habitation is.

1. We must experience His indwelling if we would profit by it. "Come and see." Come, look upon thyself, O soul, in the hours of devotion, when thou art all alone with God and the blessed ones. It is not hard to discern whether or not the Master is then to be found in His

palace of ivory, the heart all clean and fragrant with love for Him.

2. Come to the altar, and see whether He dwells there or not. We know that He does. There His saints delight in Him, and from His sacred Flesh and Blood draw celestial life unto eternal blessedness. Does He dwell at the altar for thee? Come by self-examination, and see.

3. At the last day He shall bid every one come and see where He dwells, reigning upon His throne, man's righteous, though most merciful, Judge. If we forget not this, we shall be ready to hearken to that first, Come and see, which, for the blessed, is the entering into the joy of their Lord.

II.

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."—St. John 1. 40-42.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom comments as follows: "Andrew, after having tarried with Jesus and learned what He did, kept not the treasure to himself, but hastens and runs quickly to his brother, to impart to him of the good things which he had received. But wherefore has not John said on what matters Christ conversed with them? Whence is it clear that it was for this that they abode with Him? Observe what Andrew says to his brother: *We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.* You see how, as far as he had learned in a short time, he showed the wisdom of the teacher Who persuaded them, and

their own zeal, who cared for these things long ago, and from the beginning. For this word, *We have found*, is the expression of a soul which travails for His presence, and looks for His coming from above, and is overjoyed when the looked-for thing has happened, and hastens to impart to others the good tidings. This is the part of brotherly affection, of natural friendship, of a sincere disposition; to be eager to stretch out the hand to each other in spiritual things."

So of the saying, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona," the same father writes: "By the present, the future is guaranteed; for it is clear that He who named Peter's father foreknew the future also." And again: "The servants of God whose names were changed in Old Testament days—as St. Peter's new name is here given him—received each a different name. We now all have one name, that which is greater than any: being called *Christians*, and *sons of God*, and His *friends*, and His *Body*. For the very term itself is able, more than all those others, to rouse us, and make us more zealous for the practice of virtue. Let us not then act unworthily of the honour belonging to the title, considering the excess of our dignity, we who are called Christ's; for so Paul hath named us.

Let us bear in mind and respect the grandeur of the appellation."

St. Augustine says: "It is no great thing that the Lord declared whose son Simon was. What is great to the Lord? He knew all the names of His saints, whom He predestinated before the foundation of the world; and dost thou marvel that He said to one man, Thou art this or that man's son, and thou shalt be called by this or that name? Is it a great matter that He changed his name, and made it Peter instead of Simon? Peter is from *petra*, a rock, and the rock is the Church: in the name of Peter, therefore, the Church was shadowed forth."

Isaac Williams says: "This is all that is recorded of that transaction, for the calling of St. Peter was of itself sufficiently worthy of mention. And our Lord speaks here as He does through the Holy Scriptures, in which the giving or changing a name by God Himself is replete with great things, for His word is the creative cause of all things; thus was it of old when He converted Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel; and gave to some their names at birth, as that of Isaac, of Solomon, of John, and others, indicating thereby the greatness of the things He would fulfil in

them. The first words were an expression of endearment and personal knowledge: *Thou art Simon, the son of Jona, . . . I know thee by thy name, thou art mine*; and the last of future exaltation: *I will give thee a new name, thou shalt be called Cephas*. And both, as St. Chrysostom has noticed, bear testimony to our Lord's divinity; for this, more than anything else, is the attribute of God, to know the future. . . . If we look to the mystical signification, it is as if He had said, Thou art Simon, that is *obedient*; but this hereafter shall be united with Peter; thy obedience shall be built on the rock; and the floods shall arise, and the winds beat on thee in vain."

Stier says: "The new name which He gives is, first of all, a revelation in the light of His own countenance of Simon's peculiar and natural character, as in the case of the *sons of thunder*; it specifies his danger, and the temptation of his inborn nature, and also its transformation and sanctification in the new birth. Thus it is given as a promise, as well as a warning. He who receives his new name from the Lord, and well sustains it, will become that to which he is called."

First Thought.—We ought not ever to forget our individuality in the sight of God. It is

said to be a gift of kings that they always remember every one of their subjects who has been presented to them. The King of kings has no difficulty in knowing most intimately and personally every one of His creatures, though there be countless millions of them. He not only knows us, and all about us, but He caused us to be what we are. "Thou art Simon the son of Jona," He said to St. Peter, and it is as if He said to every one of us, Thou art what thou art, because it was my will to create thee thus. Our descent is not accidental; the time of our coming upon the stage of life was foreordained; our characters were caused to be just what they are by the divine wisdom; the circumstances of our existence were mapped out for us from eternity. Had we, then, no share in bringing our life down to its present stage of being? Surely, for we are free agents; nevertheless, it was plainly foreseen by the Almighty what line our free agency would take, and He caused our circumstances so to fit in with that line of action that, at every period of our life, we have been just where it was His gracious will that we should be.

For what purpose does He, then, hedge us about, and keep us ever under His guidance? In order that He may move our free agency to

seek heaven and eternal life. He desires above all things that we may be saved; and while we must ourselves choose salvation—we cannot be saved without the co-operation of our own wills—it is His good pleasure to surround us at every stage in our earthly career with the conditions most favourable to our salvation. We ought to hear Him saying to us, Thou art such and such an one, made to be what thou art, and set in the world where thou art, by My love and goodness, in order that thou mightest bestir thyself to seek eternal life.

Second Thought.—Our gracious Master is not content with fashioning our circumstances for us in the best possible way for our attainment of blessedness, but He takes us one by one, and endows us with a great and heavenly gift of new life. The old life, which we inherit from our parents, is unequal to the work of development into fitness for the celestial existence. In Baptism we received the supernatural life, we were born again, and made heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Then we received our Christian names, but each one's Christian name is but a symbol of the inner soul-name which the Lord gave him that day, if he was seen to be of the number of the elect who should attain to the celestial kingdom at the last. This

secret name which our Lord has for every one of His saints we cannot know in this world. It is given to those who overcome, says St. John in the Apocalypse. It is the name which perfectly declares each one's character as fashioned by the divine grace. If we bear it now, it is a prophecy of what we are to be at the last day. Then we shall know it, but no one save God and ourselves shall know it.

Perhaps that is because the secret names of the saints express a soul intimacy with our Lord which no other could adequately understand. We are all different in character, one from another, and God has His own way of developing the types of perfection in His saints in endless variety; nor could it be said that one type was lovelier than another; like exquisite flowers, each variety has its own individual loveliness. We wish that we could know our secret names, but we could not understand them now. If we attain to blessedness, it will be the greatest joy to bear those names, and to look back upon our days here in the world, and to see how wonderfully God fashioned our souls into harmony with our names.

Third Thought.—To Simon the Master said, "Thou shalt be called Cephas." It was a prophecy of St. Peter's character, his rock-like faith

and devotion to his Lord, in spite of much falling away on the surface. To every one of us He gives a like title; for, as Christians, we are founded upon the Rock, "and that Rock was Christ." We are never to lose sight of the fact that we belong to Christ. We are not our own, we are bought with a price; we are rooted and grounded in Him. If this be not true, then our Christianity is the veriest sham. Let us, therefore, take heed that men who observe our lives shall see that we are rightly named Christians, forasmuch as we are plainly trying to live Christ-like lives. Let us take heed that, in the depths of our souls, God finds single-hearted loyalty to Christ. Let us, when we examine heart and conscience, be, most of all, careful that we admit no other standard of judgment than that of our Lord Christ. Let us hold so fast to Him that, no matter how deeply we fall into sin, we hesitate not to hasten back to Him in penitence, as did St. Peter, weeping bitterly after our fall, that, through His boundless mercy and grace, we may be restored.

III.

"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."—St. John i. 43-48.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom writes: "Christ said, *He that seeketh findeth*. Wherefore it does not occur to me any more to wonder how Philip followed Him. Andrew was persuaded when he had heard from John, and Peter the same from Andrew; but Philip—not having learned anything from any but Christ Who said to him only this, *Follow Me*—straightway

obeyed, and went not back, but even became a preacher to others. For he ran to Nathanael and said to him: *We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.* Seest thou what a thoughtful mind he had, how assiduously he meditated on the writings of Moses, and expected the Advent? For the expression, *We have found*, belongs always to those who are in some way seeking."

Theophylact says: "The voice of Christ sounded not like a common voice to the faithful, but kindled in their inmost soul the love of Him. Philip, having been continually meditating on Christ, and reading the books of Moses, so confidently expected Him that the instant he saw, he believed. Perhaps, too, he had heard of Him from Andrew and Peter, coming from the same city, Bethsaida."

Sadler points out that, "The Lord allowed the other three disciples to seek Him. With this man Philip He makes the first advance by inviting him to follow Him. The Lord saw each man's most secret heart, whether, being too forward, he required warning of the cost, or too backward, he required to be summoned or encouraged."

St. Chrysostom again says: "How this is Christ, and how the Prophets proclaimed Him

beforehand, Philip said not; but he draws Nathanael to Jesus as knowing that he would not afterwards fall off, if he should once taste His words and teaching. . . . Nathanael had considered the writings of the prophets more than Philip. For he had heard from the Scriptures that Christ must come from Bethlehem. . . . And so, when he heard that He was from Nazareth, he was confounded, and doubted, not finding the announcement of Philip to agree with the prediction of the prophet. . . . He showed, by not admitting that Christ was of Nazareth, his accuracy respecting the Scriptures, and a character not easily deceived; and by not rejecting him who brought the tidings, the great desire which he felt for the coming of Christ. For he thought within himself that Philip was mistaken about the place."

"It was proverbial," says the Bible Commentary, "*that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet*; and the candour of Nathanael would not hide a misgiving, even when it was to the dishonour of his own country."

"How was Nathanael without guile?" asks St. Augustine. "If he is a sinner, he acknowledges that he is a sinner. For if he is a sinner, and says that he is righteous, guile is in his mouth. So then in Nathanael it was the ac-

knowledge of sin that Jesus praised; He did not pronounce of him that he was not a sinner."

Lange says: "Nathanael was not merely a carnal descendant of Jacob, an Israelite after the flesh, but an Israelite in spirit, a genuine son of that new Jacob or Israel who had in faith and prayer wrestled with God, and had prevailed. Probably he was engaged in meditation and prayer under the fig tree, and thus truly a wrestler with God, like Israel of old."

And St. Augustine again: "Fig leaves signify sins; and Nathanael, when he was under the fig tree, was under the shadow of death; so that our Lord seemeth to say, O Israel, whoever of you is without guile, O people of the Jewish faith, before I called thee by my Apostles, when thou wert as yet under the shadow of death, and sawest me not, I saw thee."

Stier writes thus: "Nathanael understands something special and mysterious, connected with a time when he had repaired to his fig tree, not for refreshment and solace, but, according to the pious custom in Israel, as a place of meditation, reflection, and prayer. There had been a solemn transaction with his God—quite alone as he thought; the prayer of repentance which left him without guile, the prayer of deep longing for the consolation of Israel, and what

else Nathanael will reveal to us, when all that has been kept secret becomes known."

First Thought.—To St. Philip the Master said, "Follow me." It required more faith than to obey that call than is now asked of us, because then the truths about the Master and His kingdom were not known. There are not required less perseverance and earnestness now, however. We see by faith our Lord in heaven, surrounded by His saints, and we hear Him calling to us, "Follow me." We know that there is but one way in which we can so follow Him, the narrow and stony path of the cross; nevertheless, we persist that there must be some less trying way of ascending the heights of paradise. So all over the Christian world one sees believers trying to enjoy this present life, and to get as much as they can out of it, while carefully practising certain exercises of religion which do not interfere with their worldly pursuits, and persuading themselves that they have solved the problem of following Christ without walking in the hard way of the cross after Him. There is no greater delusion. The paths of easy-going, humanly contrived, religion never bring men out at last upon the hills of God.

How can we be sure that we are following our Lord in the strait way of life? First, by

heartily and simply striving each day to do only what we find set before us to do, and doing it for Him, just as well as we can, and with contented spirit, asking for no easier vocation than that He is pleased to assign us. Secondly, by never ceasing to keep in mind that only through imitating Him in all the gracious unselfishness of His earthly life can we follow Him in heart.

Second Thought.—In the case of Nathanael our Lord points out for us the most important characteristic of true discipleship. He declares him to be an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. That guilelessness may be understood as perfect sincerity, reality. It is not to be overlooked that he was an Israelite indeed, for that is fundamental; the Israelitish religion was the true, divinely-appointed religion, and no child of Abraham who knew it could disregard the requirements of that religion. Men do not please God in these days by affecting a fine independence of the ordinances of the Church, and pleading that their earnestness and sincerity, their guilelessness of life, is the one thing needful. They win not the praise which Nathanael received for being without guile, unless they are also Israelites indeed. We are well satisfied with our fidelity to all the ordinances of the Catholic religion; we may perhaps boast in our

hearts that we are Israelites indeed. Then let us take good heed that guilelessness be also found in our lives.

We need not greatly concern ourselves as to whether or not men pronounce us sincere and real. The world is not apt to judge impartially; it sees things only from its own standpoint, and that is apt to be a false one. There could not be anything much more unimportant than the judgments our neighbours pass upon us, save as they are truthful. It is only what we really are in the divine sight that is of consequence. Does God find us without guile, when He looks into our hearts? The way to make sure that He shall so find us is the way of unsparing self-examination by the precepts of His commandments—no other standard will do; and then the full and frank confession of every delinquency. By such self-examination, and by penitent confession, we may keep ourselves guileless.

Third Thought.—Nathanael was astonished to find that the Master had knowledge of him. We may well be surprised to think how our Lord is ever watching our daily lives, even before we have the consciousness of any special call to serve Him.

1. The fig tree may be thought of as the symbol of home. In our every-day life of homely

duties and occupation, we are under scrutiny, for there character is revealed.

2. Again, the fig tree was resorted to for one's devotions; under its shade the devout Israelite was wont to pray and to meditate. Nowhere does God observe us more closely than at our prayers, for there pre-eminently the reality of our Christian life is demonstrated.

3. More mystically, the fig tree is the tree of penitence; sinful man under its shadow finds the mercy and the pardon of God. We are all of us sinners; the difference between those who please Him and those who incur His wrath, is that the former repent of their sins, and sue for His pardon, while the latter go on in their own ways, regardless of His displeasure. He beholds every sinner, as well as every penitent.

IV.

"Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you; Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."—St. John i. 49-51.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom says: "Peter, when after so many miracles and such high doctrine confessed that our Lord was the Son of God, is called *blessed*, as having received the revelation from the Father; while Nathanael, though he said the very same thing before seeing or hearing either miracles or doctrine, had no such word addressed to him; but, as though he had not said so much as he ought to have said, is brought to things greater still. What can be the reason of this? It is that Peter and Nathanael both spoke the same words, but not both with the same intention. Peter confessed

Him to be the Son of God, but as being very God; Nathanael, as being mere man. And whence does this appear? From what he said after these words; for after, *Thou art the Son of God*, he added, *Thou art the King of Israel*. But the Son of God is not King of Israel, only, but of all the world. And what I say is clear not from this only, but also from what follows. For Christ added nothing more to Peter, but, as though his faith were perfect, said, that upon this confession of his He would build the Church; but in the other case He did nothing like this, but the contrary. For as though some large, and that the better, part were wanting to his confession, He added what follows."

Isaac Williams paraphrases the Lord's word thus: "Thou hast as yet seen nothing, seen no miracle wrought, but a word hath found thee out: the pure in heart have the blessing to see God; and the single eye readily discerns Him at once; for *if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light*. Such, therefore, have eyes to see and ears to hear; and if Israel was peculiar among the Patriarchs for his discerning of angels and of God, the simple-hearted, who is his descendant in truth, shall see the very fulfilment of what Jacob saw in a prophetic vision, when he beheld *a ladder set*

up on earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. To Nathanael the Master said, Hereafter shall ye see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man.

“Not only thou, but all who have eyes to see, shall behold the kingdom of heaven on earth; the tabernacle of God come to be with men; and such power given unto Christ in His kingdom, that angels and principalities and powers shall be made subject unto Him, ascending to heaven with prayers, and descending with blessings; the highest angels who see His face shall minister to His little ones below. And as on every other occasion which may be said to be the coming in of His kingdom, as at His nativity, and temptation, and resurrection; so especially at His ascension and at His coming to judgment, shall ascending and descending angels be seen. In many ways it is fulfilled, that *hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven*, and, as He adds on another occasion, *and all the holy angels with Him.*”

St. Chrysostom says again: “On Him as on the King’s own Son, the royal ministers as-

cended and descended; once at the season of the crucifixion, again at the time of the resurrection and the ascension, and before this also, when they *came and ministered unto Him*; when they proclaimed the glad tidings of His birth, and cried, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace*, when they came to Mary, when they came to Joseph."

The Bible Commentary points out that, "The order is remarkable; ascending and descending, not descending and ascending. The divine messengers are already on the earth, though we see them not; and they first bear the prayer to God before they bring down the answer from Him. So it was in the vision of Jacob which furnishes the image here; and by the Incarnation that vision was made an abiding reality. That which was a dream to the representative of Israel was a fact for the Son of Man. Thus the reference is to the continuing presence of Christ, in Whom believers realize the established fellowship of the seen and the unseen, and not to the special acts of angelic ministration to Christ alone during His earthly life."

First Thought.—The fact we are so unbelieving in these days when men of old, like Nathanael, who had not half our spiritual light, believed so easily and so heartily, ought to put

us to shame. Our Lord's word to that ardent disciple would indicate wonder at the readiness of his faith. It is certain that we rarely cause Him wonder for the same reason.

1. We are not unaware that He ever orders and watches over the affairs of our life in the world. If we have had any Christian experience at all, we can recall all manner of gracious interventions on His part in the days that are past, to save us from the consequences of our sins and follies; to open out for us a way of escape when difficulties seemed about to overwhelm us; to fill our lives with blessings which we certainly in no wise deserved. Such experiences ought to make us firm and loyal believers in Him; yet how quick we are to doubt and to despond whenever the least cloud appears upon the horizon of our earthly affairs!

2. We must all of us have had proof, over and over again, of His readiness to answer our prayers; to meet us in the quiet places of devotion with celestial consolations, to give us heart-assurance, which we cannot doubt, of His real presence with us in His holy sacraments. Nevertheless, we do not half believe, nor do we pray and use the sacraments as those who have confidence in His word.

3. And what true believer has not learned the

gentleness and forgivingness of His dealing with penitents! Who ever went to Him, no matter how deeply one had sinned, and did not find Him overflowing with compassion, and ready to deal with one as the loving father in the parable of the prodigal son. Yet, despite all our experience of His love for penitents, we continue to hold back from confessing our sins, and beseeching His pardon. This is not to have the faith of Nathanael.

Second Thought.—The Master promises, as of the greater things than any Nathanael had yet known, and which His followers are to experience, the seeing of heaven open.

1. This was first fulfilled literally on the day of His Ascension; for, although the enraptured disciples gathered upon the mount at that time probably looked not in upon the celestial realms, for a cloud received the Lord out of their sight; nevertheless, they saw that heaven was open, for He went in thither in His humanity, and returned not to them again.

2. Ever since that time it has been most true for the believer that he has seen heaven open by faith, knowing now so clearly and perfectly the glorious destiny which awaits the faithful follower of the Master.

3. In the worship of the Church the same

thing is mystically declared. When the Host is uplifted at the altar, it is as though heaven were opened, and the ardent disciple could look in upon the invisible things. Nor is this any delusion; for, in the Church's worship, heaven is truly opened to the faithful.

4. In hours of quiet meditation there is often an opening of heaven to the believer, his spiritual vision being illuminated to contemplate the glories of the celestial country, and the glad occupations of the holy ones.

5. In the hour of death there shall be a true opening of heaven to the redeemed soul; for, though it may not yet enter therein, it recognizes that far off country as the fatherland, and is sure that, so soon as one shall have been made fit for its blessedness, he shall receive it.

6. When the pains of purgatory have finished their gracious work for the soul, then at last in the fullest sense shall we learn the meaning of the Master's word, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open."

Third Thought.—Ever since our Lord came into the world the dream of Jacob, dreamed in Bethel so long ago, has been fulfilled in reality. For that Lord, by His incarnation, has set up upon the earth a ladder which reaches to heaven. Out upon the earth He has sent His angel hosts,

to minister to His people here below, according to that which is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" So we ought to think of those angelic hosts as having pitched their camp here upon earth, ready always to be bearing up on high our prayers and sacrifices, our fastings and our alms-deeds, that they may be offered before the celestial throne with much incense.

Then we must think of those same bright spirits descending again, upon that ladder of the incarnate Lord, laden with all manner of graces and blessings for us from out the treasury of our Father's house on high, tokens of the love and favour which He bears us; laden also with all manner of wonderful answers to our prayers, far more glorious and full than we could even have imagined. Into that sphere of being, in which all this is realized here upon earth, it is possible for every one of us to enter through loyal perseverance in devotion, if we but keep a clean conscience and a loving heart.

V.

"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come."—St. John ii. 1-4.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom says: "How then came it into the mind of His mother to imagine anything great of Him? He was now beginning to reveal Himself, and was plainly discovered by the witness of John, and by what He had said to His disciples. And before all this, the conception itself, and all its attendant circumstances, had inspired her with a very great opinion of the Child; for, saith St. Luke, she heard all the sayings concerning the Child, and kept them in her heart. Why, then, says one, did she not speak this before? Because, as I said, it was now at last that He was beginning to manifest Himself. Before this time He lived as one of the many, and therefore His

mother had not confidence to say any such thing to Him; but when she heard that John had come on His account, and that he had borne such witness to Him as he did, and that He had disciples; after that she took confidence, and called Him, and said, *They have no wine.*"

And again: "Where parents cause no impediment or hindrance in things belonging to God, it is our bounden duty to give way to them, and there is great danger in not doing so; but when they require anything unreasonably, and cause hindrance in any spiritual matter, it is unsafe to obey. And therefore He answered this in this place, and again elsewhere, *Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?* because they did not yet think rightly of Him; and she, because she had borne Him, claimed, according to the custom of other mothers, to direct Him in all things, when she ought to have revered and worshipped Him. . . . These then were the words, not of one speaking rudely to His mother, but belonging to a wise dispensation, which brought her into a right frame of mind, and provided that the miracles should be attended with that honour which was meet."

St. Augustine says: "Certainly it is with a view to a mystical meaning, that He seems not

to acknowledge His mother, her from whom He had come forth a Bridegroom, saying to her, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.* What is this? Came He for this cause to the marriage, that He might teach men to set light by their mothers? . . . Forasmuch as she was not the mother of His divine nature, and yet His divine nature must work the miracle for which she asked, He answered her, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* But lest thou shouldest think I deny thee to be my mother, *Mine hour is not yet come;* I will acknowledge thee as soon as the weakness of which thou art the mother shall hang upon the cross. . . . He commends His mother to the disciple; commends His mother, as being about to die before His mother, and to rise again before His mother's death: Himself a human being, commends to him human, her human. To this had Mary given birth. The hour was now come of which He had then spoken, *Mine hour is not yet come."*

Isaac Williams comments thus: "He granted the miracle here to her suggestion, not as a maternal request, but to the faith indicated thereby: and thus did He work the first of His miracles in testimony to the pre-eminence of her faith, not out of deference to human re-

lationship. . . . These words of our Lord may also be connected with another mystery: at this feast our Lord appears to be taking leave of His mother in order to be united to His Church; for this His union with His Church seems to be typified by this marriage-feast. He seems, therefore, to be Himself doing in mystery that which He soon after called upon His disciples to do literally; to leave father and mother and all that they had, and to cleave unto Him."

St. Chrysostom says again: "Christ was not subject to the necessity of seasons, but rather settled their order, since He is their Creator; and therefore He saith in this place, *Mine hour is not yet come*. His meaning is that as yet He was not manifest to the many, nor had He even His whole company of disciples. . . . Moreover, none of these, not even His mother nor His brethren, knew Him as they ought. . . . And those at the wedding did not know Him, either, for in their need they would certainly have come to and entreated Him. Therefore He saith, *Mine hour is not yet come*; that is, I am not yet known to the company, nor are they even aware that the wine has failed; let them first be sensible of this. I ought not to have been told it from thee; thou art my

mother, and renderest the miracle suspicious. They who wanted the wine should have come and besought Me, not that I need this, but that they might with an entire assent accept the miracle. . . . One who has not a sense of his need, will never have a clear sense of the benefit."

First Thought.—It is a very common thing for us to go to our Lord in our times of necessity as if we had some sort of claim upon Him; as if He, in a way, owed us a recognition of our relationship to Him. He replies to us, "What have I to do with thee?" in order that He may bring us to a truer sense of the facts of our lives. Perhaps we think that we have been very zealous for His glory, full of earnestness in our worship, quick to take His part, and to answer for His cause when men have ridiculed or disparaged it in any way. We know better than that in our hearts, if we truly examine ourselves. We have not been so zealous for the Master's sake that we can reasonably claim recompense of our zeal. How often the very opposite is true. We would persuade ourselves in our moments of disappointment because heaven does not seem to smile upon our lives, that we have done much, and practised many self-denials for the Church, and for God's

cause generally; so that we are almost ready to say that He is unkind in not recognizing our service. We know better than that.

When have we ever done a tithe of what we ought to do? And if we had done everything we should yet be but unprofitable servants, who had barely performed their bounden duty. Sometimes it is upon our obedience, our docility and patience, that we pride ourselves; we have been so willing to bear our burdens, so uncomplaining. We feel in a moment, when we stop to think, that this is as far as possible from the truth. We all break down most pitifully in patience and trust. Perhaps we fancy we have been so devoted in our duty to our neighbour that we have a right to look for the Master's approbation. Yet how many unkind, unloving words and deeds toward those whom we dislike must be set over against our gracious doings toward those it was not hard to help! Truly, our Lord may well say to us as we approach Him, "What have I to do with thee?"

Second Thought.—Just so soon as we have learned the lesson that we cannot on any ground claim consideration from God as of right—for we have utterly failed in every particular to live as His servants ought to live—then the other side of His relation to us is

manifested. He is in no respect like us in demanding His rights, and insisting that justice, and only justice, be meted out to those who have failed to do His will; but He loves to show mercy, and those things which none of us could claim on ground of right, He delights to bestow upon us of His bounty. "What have I to do with thee?" He seems to say, that like man I should measure my goodness toward man by the standard of his deserving? We cannot hope to establish any claim upon His goodness by the loyalty of our lives, yet we may fearlessly look for, and be certain of obtaining, all the wealth of heaven, when we place our dependence upon His mercy. Let us not forget, however, that the hope of experiencing His mercy rests upon our faith, our penitence, and our forgivingness.

Third Thought.—We may never forget that God's times are not as our times; He has His hour, and we must be content to wait for it. It is certain that *it will come*.

1. When we do not find the answers to our prayers, and it seems to us as if we were not being heard at all, we should call to mind that His hour is not yet come. If He should answer our prayers when and how we think important, the result would be evil for us, and not good.

Let us try to wait contentedly till His hour come; it is certain that it will come.

2. We are fain to cry, If only one could but have true faith in our Lord, could but feel within one's self such confidence in His love and care that one should never be distressed because prayers seem not to be answered. He seems to reply, "Mine hour is not yet come." It is not given to the servants of God easily to attain the sense of the Master's presence with them. We must work for that great blessedness, by tirelessness in prayer, by fidelity to meditation, and by very earnest preparation for participation in, and thanksgiving after, Holy Communion. His hour for revealing Himself is sure to come some day.

3. Probably we shall not in this world reach such a sense of the divine presence that we shall never be without Him, but even this greatest thing is surely set before us to be attained when the soul passes forth into the land of spirits. Then shall come His hour, in which He is realized by His faithful ones as all in all.

VI.

"And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it."—St. John ii. 6-8.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom asks: "Why was it that He did not the miracle before they filled them, which would have been more marvellous by far? For it is one thing to change given matter to a different quality, and another to create matter out of nothing. The latter would, indeed, have been more wonderful, but would not have seemed so credible to the many. And therefore He often purposely lessens the greatness of His miracles, that it may be the more readily received. But why, says one, did not He Himself produce the water which He afterward showed to be wine, instead of bidding the servants bring it? For the very same reason: and also, that He might have those who

drew it out to witness that what had been effected was no delusion; since, if any had been inclined to be shameless, those who ministered might have said to them, We drew the water, we filled the vessels."

Isaac Williams says: "These vessels were of very large dimensions for any quantity of wine, and the mention of it indicates that the miracle must have left abundance more than was consumed, as in the two miracles of the loaves . . . for in those cases, also, the great quantity remaining over is particularly specified; and in the widow's oil, multiplied by Elisha, the abundance is very marked . . . for God giveth not by measure in the dispensation of the Spirit. His mercies abound and run over, and there is much left, of which there is found none meet to partake, while His compassions fail not, and there is much room at the table of His bounties. These six waterpots St. Augustine mystically explains as the six ages of the world, which Christ orders to be filled with water; for they are by Him filled with prophecy, and He converts the same into the new wine of His Gospel; for in them Christ was hidden till His word commands it to be drawn forth."

And again the same author: "The whole ac-

count intimates ready and instant obedience on the part of the servants, as in that description of perfect obedience given by the centurion: I say unto one Go, and he goeth; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. The old wine was being exhausted; the old dispensation seemed to fail from the corruptions of the Pharisees, which had come to the dregs; but Christ comes, not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law, by perfect obedience; and then to convert the obedience and righteousness of the natural man—which is but as water, unstable and unprofitable—into that love which is the true fulfilment of the commandment. *They filled them to the brim*; for not one jot or tittle of the Law shall fail, being perfected in His servants.”

Stier says: “Jesus commands that the whole of the six waterpots which were there for the Jewish purification (out of which the first manifestation of the glory of His new grace should come forth) should be *filled*, in order that not a little of the miraculous wine should remain over as a dowry; for this was as befitting on the present occasion as in Elisha’s gift out of God’s fulness, when the oil ceased not, till there was no longer a vessel to receive it. The servants fill them *to the brim*; strictly complying with Mary’s direction, that they

should do whatsoever He said unto them; and now they wait, looking at Him, not at the water, which in the meantime is made wine.

“Then speaks He majestically, precisely defining the instant of the creating miracle: *Draw out now*, and nevertheless in His humility discloses not what was transpiring. . . . Finally, His directing the servants to carry the wine to the governor of the feast, appertains to the entire and gracious condescension of the whole. It stands a solitary example in the evangelical history, of His most full and benignant approximation to human order and custom; and that in a matter which belongs to the slighter things of life, rather to its hilarity than its earnest work.”

The spiritual meaning of the six waterpots of stone according to St. Jerome is this: they are the six virtues spoken of in the Bible to which God promises the forgiveness of sins: compunction, confession, alms-doing, forgivingness, bodily discipline, and obedience; these the servants of God must fill by willing effort.

First Thought.—It is to be noted that the Master does not call upon His servants for anything more than they are able to do. We think about the saints and the perfection of their holiness, without spot before the throne of God,

and we are fain to sigh and grow discouraged, crying, Who can ever reach up to such great things? Yet He but bids us fill the waterpots with water, for here water stands for that which human effort can accomplish, as distinct from the wine of the work of the Holy Ghost.

1. It is within our power to evince true compunction for our sins; for, though our sorrow may not seem deep enough to be called contrition, yet if it move us to rest not until we have sought relief in confession, and to tireless effort to make amends for whatsoever wrong we have done, it is truly the sort of sorrow which fills the waterpot of compunction to the brim.

2. Though our confessions seem very inadequate, and to but poorly uncover all the sinfulness of our souls; yet if there be careful preparation for them, and the honest effort to declare frankly everything which is on the conscience, there is a true filling to the brim of the second waterpot.

3. Our almsdeeds seem seldom free from selfish taint, hardly ever as hearty as they might be; yet, if we persist in our effort to be always ready to help, and to the utmost of our ability, we shall some day, in heaven's eyes, succeed in filling up the waterpot of works of mercy to the brim also.

4. We find it very hard to forgive some of the wrongs done us; yet, if we will but revert constantly to our own utter need of the divine forgiveness, we shall learn little by little that this fourth waterpot may also be filled by earnest followers of the Master.

5. Nothing is much harder for most people in the Christian life than mortification, fasting, and self-denial. We have before us, however, the examples of the saints, to teach us what amazing results may be attained by those who are tireless in their efforts to fill to the brim the waterpot of bodily discipline.

6. Obedience is the most royal of all virtues, the one which the natural man most strenuously rejects. Nevertheless, it is certain that it is a waterpot which may be filled to the brim by such as set their wills to the task.

Second Thought.—This word of our Lord, "Fill the waterpots with water," may well suggest to us the way in which He is pleased to co-operate with us in the sacramental life. For the sacraments are as waterpots, which it belongs to us to fill with water by heartily complying with all the outward part of each ordinance. We need not concern ourselves with the way in which the Holy Ghost regenerates the

infant at the font. It is certain that He does His part when we do ours. No one can explain how the sevenfold gift of the Spirit is received in Confirmation; yet, that it is received by all who faithfully prepare for Confirmation, is beyond question. How the words of the priest can convey the divine absolution has not been revealed; but that they do so convey it in the sacrament of Penance to all genuine penitents, is explicitly told us. How the bread and wine can be changed into our Lord's Body and Blood, and these be given to the faithful for their spiritual food and sustenance, passes comprehension. Nevertheless, the facts are certain. How great heed, then, should we give to do our part in each sacrament with scrupulous fidelity, that the divine co-operation may not fail us!

Third Thought.—The hour cannot be very far off from any one of us in which the Lord shall say to His servants, the angels, Draw out now the contents of the lives of these children of men, and bear them unto the Governor of the feast, the great God Himself. It is, alas, true that then many waterpots shall be found never to have been filled, many in which the water of human doing was never transformed into the wine of divine vitality by God's grace, many in which that which once was good wine

has soured into worthless vinegar, fit only to be cast out.

1. Wise souls are they which, night by night, draw out the hidden essence of their lives, and bear it unto the Governor of the feast, that, it being tested by Him in their presence, they may be taught how to further the transforming of the water of their effort into His good wine, and how to safeguard such good wine as is found in them from spoiling.

2. Wiser souls yet are they which draw out the results of these nightly self-examinations, and bear them from time to time to the earthly representatives of the Great Ruler of the feast, even to God's priests in the confessional, that all failure of the transforming miracle in their lives may be overcome, and the good wine of God increase in them more and more, to the fulness of its perfection.

VII.

"And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."—St. John ii. 13-16.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams says: "There seems a particular reason why St. John should introduce this circumstance; for the other Evangelists had recorded a charge made against our Lord at His death, of His having spoken of destroying the temple, and His rebuilding it in three days; a very remarkable prophecy to be then brought forward, but yet there is no mention of the occasion on which our Lord delivered it. It is this, therefore, which St. John now proceeds to supply."

And St. Augustine: "It is evident that this was done on two several occasions: the first

mentioned by John, the last by the other three Evangelists."

The same father says, also: "Such sacrifices were prescribed to the people, in condescension to their carnal minds, to prevent them from turning aside to idols."

And Bede: "Those who came from a distance, being unable to bring with them the animals required for sacrifice, brought the money instead. For their convenience the scribes and Pharisees ordered animals to be sold in the temple, in order that when the people had bought and offered them, afterwards they might sell them again, and thus make great profits. The changers of money sat at the table to supply change to buyers and sellers. But, our Lord disapproving of any worldly business in His house, especially one of so questionable a kind, drove out all engaged in it."

Origen adds: "Should it appear something out of the order of things, that the Son of God should make a scourge of small cords, to drive them out of the temple? We have one answer in which some take refuge, by the divine power of Jesus Who, when He pleased, could extinguish the wrath of His enemies however innumerable, and quiet the tumult of their minds. This act indeed exhibits no less power than His

more positive miracles; nay, rather more than the miracle by which water was converted into wine, in that the subject-matter was inanimate; here the minds of so many thousands of men are overcome."

"He began," says Stier, "His refining and purifying by an act of zeal which every true zealot in Israel, whether with or without office, would have been justified, and indeed was bound, to execute; but no man performed it; the traders and money changers sat in the temple, palpable signs of its decline and perversion. Then is His spirit stirred by the holy indignation of chastising truth; He does not merely speak, for no simple word would have said enough duly to denounce this omission of duty; He begins Himself to act: drives with the scourge the men and their cattle out of the temple, pours out their mammon, overturns those unsanctified tables in the sanctuary, which exhibited to Him at His very entrance the Jewish nation of traffickers."

Bede points out that, "The sellers of doves are they who, after receiving the free grace of the Holy Spirit, do not dispense it freely, as they are commanded, but at a price."

And St. Augustine: "By the oxen may be understood the Apostles and prophets who have

dispensed to us the Holy Scriptures. Those who by these very Scriptures deceive the people, from whom they seek honour, sell the oxen; and they sell the sheep, too, the people themselves."

Bede adds: "The sheep are works of purity and piety, and they sell the sheep who do works of piety to gain the praise of men. They exchange money in the temple, who, in the Church, openly devote themselves to secular business."

And Origen: "By the temple we may understand the soul wherein the Word of God dwelleth; in which, before the teaching of Christ, earthly and bestial affections had prevailed. The ox, being the tiller of the soil, is the symbol of earthly affections; the sheep, being the most irrational of all animals, of dull ones; the dove is the type of light and volatile thoughts; and money, of earthly good things; which money Christ cast out by the word of His doctrine."

First Thought.—Our Lord speaks of His Father's house with great impressiveness. It was much to Him, though so inadequate as a declaration of the infinity of the divine greatness. We ought to think of the Father's house, first, as the celestial kingdom, of which the Master said, "In my Father's house are many

mansions," and after that as the earthly Church, where He deigns to give His presence in order to receive the worship of His people, and to hearken to their petitions. He has also a house within the heart of each true believer, according to that which the Master said again, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." As His loyal ones we must be very jealous for the honour of the house of God, the Church.

1. We must not suffer therein the sheep and the oxen, the ways and methods of this world's work. There is ever the tendency to glorify our business methods, and to fancy that spiritual things never can become practical unless they are made to conform to the ways of the world. It is so easy to say that the Church cannot be successful if she insists on high spiritual standards; people will not submit to restrictions on their liberty. So religion must be brought down to a level at which it will not displease the world; must be content to house the sheep and oxen, and become as the market place. All such lowering of standards is strenuously to be resisted by the true follower of Christ; the sheep and the oxen are indignantly to be driven out.

2. We are wont to glory in a spurious charity,

to dwell fondly upon the dove-like spirit of Christian love which is ready to sacrifice all the distinctive principles of the Church, to ignore the work and operation of the heavenly Dove, the Holy Ghost. Let us make haste to cause the removal from God's Church of everything which sets at nought the reality of the divine revelation.

3. Very easily does the Church in these days fall a prey to the money changers, to the notion that she must by all means obtain the wealth of this world, if she is to do her work. As a consequence, covetousness and simony taint her in every direction. The tables of the money changers must be overthrown. The Church needs no more for her work than that which her own children can with self-denial supply.

Second Thought.—Our Father's house ought to be within us, as well as without in His Church; and this inner house of the soul needs purifying, just as much as the outward temple.

1. There is the ever-present worldliness; the sheep and the oxen allowed to occupy the sacred precincts, not only in the way in which we suffer our thoughts in time of prayer and worship to wander off to all manner of temporal things, but in the lamentable way in which the best of Christians allow this world's cares and duties to

crowd out their times of devotion, and say that they cannot help it. Better any loss of time and money and sleep, than that we should not give our due measure of daily prayer and praise to God.

2. There are the doves of gentle longing and aspiration, our day dreams of beauty and of peace, when we cry, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest"; for we are not then yearning after the celestial Dove, the Holy Ghost, and for the rest which comes from the devout use of His grace, but for ease and freedom from the hardness of the cross. "Take these things hence," the Master says. This world must be the world of strife and hardness; rest comes hereafter for those who have striven.

3. Alas, how much the money changing means for us, also! It seems impossible for us to get away from the thought that money is necessary to our happiness; we grieve and mourn because of our poverty, and we show no faith in God, no dependence upon Him. If only we would overthrow all such tables!

Third Thought.—In one sense it is true that our Father's house ought to be a place of business for us, even as the Master in His boyhood's days cried, "Wist ye not that I must be about

my Father's business?" It is good to make a business of serving God, yet not as if it were a mere matter of business, but life's occupation all transfigured by a great love. It does not come to most people easily; there is needed much practice in the service of God to develop love for it, but it can be attained. It is good to remember that He does not deal with us after the manner of a strict master in business, but as a loving Father, very tenderly stooping down to accept and bless the poor halting efforts of His ignorant little children, who are trying to do something to please Him. The Father's house then becomes a house of merchandise, for all the treasures of heaven are bountifully dispensed to us in return for our cold prayers, our often lapsing obedience.

VIII.

"Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days? But He spake of the temple of His body."—St. John ii. 18-21.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams points out that the Jews turned not the warning which our Lord had given them to their profit by repenting, but demanded that He should show His authority by a sign. "Thus man's evil nature, after all that has been done, is ever asking for sensible evidence, instead of seeking by obedience for the eye of faith. Christ indeed was about to work many miracles at this passover; yet not such as were to gratify their unbelief, but to be discerned by the faithful few who had eyes to see. But He ever answers every request, even though appearing not to answer; and the very words which He spake unto them were in themselves, as Origen has observed, a sign of the

most remarkable kind; a sign which, on account of this their wickedness, which He was endeavouring to correct, they would not receive; and so would bring about the very fulfilment of it. It was a sign, the strongest that could be offered, for it contained within it a most remarkable prophecy. As of all miracles there is none which God so entirely keeps in His own hands, and ascribes to Himself, as that of foretelling things to come, so He calls on mankind as witnesses of the same."

St. Chrysostom says: "Many such sayings He utters which were not intelligible to His immediate hearers, but which were to be so to those that should come after. And wherefore doth He this? In order that when the accomplishment of His prediction should have come to pass, He might be seen to have foreknown from the beginning what was to follow; which indeed was the case with this prophecy. . . . But at the time when this was spoken, the Jews were perplexed as to what it might mean, and cast about to discover. . . . Wherefore, then, did He not resolve the difficulty and say, I speak not of that temple, but of My flesh? Why does the Evangelist, writing the Gospel at a later period, interpret the saying, and Jesus keep silence at the time? Why did He

so keep silence? Because they would not have received His word; for if not even the disciples were able to understand the saying, much less were the multitudes."

And Stier, as follows: "The Lord did not now, as He never afterward did, *show* the Jews a sign at their demand; He *gives* them a sign, instead, which, according to the word of Moses, should come to pass in its own time; and thus fulfils all legal righteousness, so far as their question was actually grounded upon that. He leaves unanswered the evil of their question, and yet says to them, *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*. A second word of mystery, in which His enemies found much food for their speculation, even till under the cross, and at the stone of the sepulchre. That the comment of the Evangelist, *He spake of the temple of His body*, must through the Holy Ghost be the true one, admits of no doubt to a believing student of Scripture. . . . It is equally certain, on the other hand, that the Lord must have spoken of that temple, of that desecrated house of His Father, about which the question then was; for He proceeds, now as ever, from the present circumstance to the deeper truth which He attaches to it; He speaks to the understanding

of His hearers, so that they might understand, even where they will not.

“But no man could have immediately thought of the temple of His body at that time, as even the disciples perceived that latent meaning only after the resurrection. How can the question be solved but thus, that the Lord speaks of both at the same time? And so, indeed, it was. This mysterious wonder word has not a misleading double sense, but the two sides of its deep meaning are, in reality, one. For what is the new temple built by Christ, after that old one, new-built by Herod, was destroyed, but His Church, the new people of God, the house of the Father and the Son, the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost? And is not this Church His Body, raised up and nourished out of His risen body? Again, did not the Jews, in destroying His body upon the cross, cast down their typical temple, and effect and work out its destruction? For *this* temple, on which they in hypocrisy rely, while they honour not its Lord, and receive Him not when He comes to it, is a *shadow and type* of the Body and Church of the Lord.”

First Thought.—The Jews who put our Lord to death little realized that they were destroying the religion on which they prided them-

selves, and that they were forever taking away from the temple, which was their delight, its glory and its honour as the house of God upon earth. Though they destroyed that which had enjoyed such prestige, God's work among men was not brought to nought. Quickly did He raise up the new temple for His abiding Presence, the Catholic Church. It was in the three great days of His incarnation, His passion, and His resurrection, that the work of that celestial rebuilding was effected. We need never fear that the malice of the devil, or the wickedness of man, can prevail against God's Church. It has often happened in the history of Christianity that parts of the Church, and many individual souls, have succumbed to temptation and have been lost; yet it has always been true that in other parts of the world the divine religion has made, just at those times, its greatest strides. It seems likely to be true that at the end of the world the Church among the Christian nations, so-called, shall be destroyed, by the assault of Antichrist, and that then the hope of the Gospel shall be centred in the Jews, who shall in vast numbers embrace the faith and become its most gallant champions.

We need never fear the power of devil or man to overthrow God's Church. He is always able

to raise it up again the third day, no matter how mighty its foes may be. But we have to beware lest we go down with those who vainly trust in their outward Christian profession, and are not loyal in heart to the Master. There is no promise that we as individuals shall be raised again, if we prove unfaithful, but only that He will raise up faithful ones to take the places we have forfeited.

Second Thought.—There is a wonderful note of confidence in the Master's word, however, even as applied to individual disciples with all their sins and shortcomings. How quickly was Adam restored to favour and the divine blessing, although not yet redeemed, after his fall. There was the day of his judgment, and the day of his expulsion from the happy garden, but also the third day of the gracious promise of redemption. We are given such good treasure of grace in these days, since our Lord has come bringing redemption. The temple of God within us, destroyed by original sin, is quickly raised again by the work of the three great days of our Baptism, our Confirmation, our first Communion. Catholics of the Oriental Communion give all three of these sacraments at the same time to the infant brought to the Lord.

We are thus built up into living temples of God, in which the Holy Ghost delights to dwell. But after awhile we become careless, self-willed, disobedient; we allow Satan to lead us away, time after time, and so at last we destroy the temple of God by mortal sin. He will not permit it to be so; He fairly forces His mercy upon us. The gracious Spirit pleads with us to repent and turn back again; He succeeds in touching our hearts, and drawing us to the doors of the Church as penitents. There is *compunction* for our sin, by which the foundation of the new building is laid; *confession*, its upper structure; then all its parts are roofed in and completed by *satisfaction*, the hearty amending of our evil ways. In three days God has upraised within us the temple of the Holy Ghost, which we by mortal sin had destroyed.

Third Thought.—At last death comes and claims his prey. No one may escape him, and because death is the penalty of sin, it would appear to be true that, in spite of the gift of repentance, so often availed of in this life, we are yet to be overwhelmed by the consequences of the fall. We know better than that. Death is full of sadness to the children of men who have no hope of any better living beyond the grave, and to whom the days of this world are

still pleasant. We know that for the faithful servant of Christ, death is but the entering of the soul upon the experiences of those three great days of God's building, wherein all the mischief of Adam's overthrow is to be forever undone.

1. There is the day of purgatory, wherein by penances, tempered according to the divine wisdom and mercy, the soul is purified and clothed upon with the graces of immortality.

2. After the day of purgatory the sweet, glad day of paradise, in which glorified souls look into the face of their Lord, and are permitted to bear their part in the work of bringing in His kingdom.

3. After that, the great day of the final resurrection, when, in bodies more glorious than we can now even conceive, they shall enter into the everlasting joy of their Lord.

IX.

"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—St. John iii. 1-3.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams says: "What Nicodemus intended to ask, if he could have found words to declare it, was, perhaps, something of this kind: Your miracles are real and genuine beyond doubt, and such as to evince that God is with you: but how is it, and what are we to think? Is it possible that you can be the Messiah, Who art so mean and despised of men, poor in appearance, poor in associates, from a country ignoble to a proverb, acknowledged and countenanced by none of the learned or great; neither as Moses, honoured among princes; nor as David, in kingly station; nor as Aaron, among priests; nor as Joshua, or

Zorobabel; without station, or authority, or honour, or wealth? And there was something more than all this in his mind, which no tongue could express; for Christ was clothed all over with that scorn and hatred which sinful man ever hath to the holiness of God."

And St. Chrysostom: "He came by night, because he feared to do so by day. Yet, not for this did the merciful God reject or rebuke him, or deprive him of His instruction; but even with much kindness conversed with him, and disclosed to him very exalted doctrines, enigmatically, indeed; nevertheless, He disclosed them. . . . He thought he had said something great when he had spoken as he did of Christ. What, then, saith Christ? To show that he had not yet set foot, even on the threshold, of right knowledge, nor stood in the porch, but was yet wandering somewhere without the palace, both he and whoever else should say the like, and that he had not so much as glanced toward true knowledge when he held such an opinion of the Only-Begotten, what saith He? *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* It is something like this: If thou art not born again, if thou partakest not of the Spirit, Which is by the washing of

regeneration, thou canst not have a right opinion of me; for the opinion which thou hast is not spiritual, but carnal. But He did not speak thus, as refusing to confound one who had brought such as he had, and had spoken to the best of his ability; and He leads him unsuspectedly up to greater knowledge, saying, *Except a man be born again.* It is impossible, saith Christ, for one not so born to see the kingdom of God; in this pointing to Himself, and declaring that there is another sight beside the natural one, and that we have need of other eyes to behold Christ."

Stier comments as follows: "The *birth* is a figure, nay, more; the physical birth is only the type of that more essential birth which is unto the life of the Spirit. Mere change of life suffices not, nor any mere change of thought. . . . This cannot otherwise be stated; the necessary ordinance of nature in reference to human birth, as appointed after the fall, is shown to have a prophetic reference to the new birth of the sinner. As no man can behold the light of the living without being thus born, so can no man see spiritually in the kingdom of God without this new birth. It is impossible in the nature of things. The Lord says not *may*, but opposes to the *no man can* of Nico-

demus another *can*, yet more emphatic and sure. The mystery and marvel of its origination, both in the case of the natural and the spiritual birth, is lost in the first creating fiat of the omnipotent God. . . . In the term, *kingdom of God*, the Lord lays hold of the Jew, by the fundamental idea of his national expectation and hope. . . . To see the kingdom of God, is a phrase which includes all from the first perception and experience of the beginnings of that kingdom, up to the full participation of the blessedness of eternal life. It is therefore fundamentally equivalent to the entering in of the fifth verse; to have a right idea of it, and to participate in it, are one and the same thing. There is no such thing as seeing the kingdom of God at a distance, as Braune energetically says."

First Thought.—Our Lord is wont to begin His most solemn statements of heavenly doctrine after this fashion, "Verily, verily," using the word, literally *Amen*, to impress us with the greatness of that which He is revealing, and doubling that *Amen* that we may recognize the immutability of the divine good pleasure which the revelation makes known to us. And His form of speech is, *I say unto you*, that we may never in our hearts question the authority on

which His religion comes to us. Thoughtless and trifling folk are wont to say that this or that part of the Church's teaching is but a doctrine of men; or, that the writers of the books of the Bible were not so inspired of God that they could make no mistake in what they recorded. The Church will not suffer us to stop at the definitions of the creed, or at the words of Holy Scripture as if they were the source and fount of her teaching, but takes us directly to the Master Himself. It is from Him that all the doctrine she has to give to the world comes. Councils have had to elucidate, and apply it to the settlement of disputed matters, but all that we believe has come down in the Church from the Lord Himself, and the authority for it is His "Verily, verily, I say unto you."

It is most important that we lose not sight of His majestic, teaching Figure, for He is the Lord of the universe, Who came forth out of the unapproachable light in order that He might make known to mankind the way of salvation, and seal that way by His death. This means practically:

1. That we ever reverently adore our Master Christ, dwelling with loving awe upon the sub-

limity of His Person, the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

2. That we ever devoutly and obediently receive all the celestial doctrine which He has revealed to us in His Church, counting ourselves happy indeed that such unheard-of things should have been told to us.

Second Thought.—To those accustomed to the ways and ideas of this world, it is a very startling thing to be told that one must be born again. We like to think that we have entered upon our true life in having human nature, a type of being so far above that of all the lower creatures about us, a type of being upon the superb possibilities of which we love to dwell. To what, indeed, may not men hope to attain of power and knowledge in the ages of the world yet to come? To mount to the greatest conceivable height of earthly glory, our Lord seems to say, is nothing at all. Man was made for the kingdom of God, and he cannot enter into it save by being *born again*. All that evolution has done for him here counts for nothing. The life of the kingdom of God is of a radically different type, not to be even approached along the lines of the education and culture of this world. At least *we* may congratulate ourselves that we have been born again, at the font made

members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

Nevertheless, it profits us not to have been born into the unearthly life if we are not living it. What if the glorious moth should return to the dust, to live as the base caterpillar, out of which it had its being by a new birth? The creatures of nature do not as individuals thus revert to type; but man is a free agent, and may by his own act forfeit the gift of the new birth. It ought to concern us greatly, then, to make sure whether our life is that of those who are born again in Christ, or not. Are we different in our manner of living, in the view we take of life, in our aims and thoughts, our hopes and fears, from those who have never been made members of Christ by the new birth of Baptism? It profits not to have been born, if one live not the life into which one has been born.

Third Thought.—Our Lord furnishes us with a test concerning the reality of our being born again. If one have not been so born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. What does He mean by the kingdom of God? That exquisite realm in which the conditions of being are all celestial and all-satisfying and everlasting, the life which angels and blessed saints already live, in which they see God face to face, and are not consumed. This kingdom of God has its porch,

its outer court, for us, in the precincts of holy Church here below, in the life which the faithful in Christ here may lead by loyal obedience to His will and systematic use of His holy sacraments.

1. The children of this world who have not been born again, may fancy that they can see the kingdom; they can picture it in imagination, but, they no more behold its reality than one who looks at a fair landscape on canvas really gazes upon the lovely scene in mountain or forest which it portrays. One never can hope to see that kingdom, not even in the world to come, unless he be born again by holy Baptism.

The baptized believer may feel himself to be without spiritual vision. He seems never to see the kingdom of God in very truth; nevertheless, it is all spread out about him, he is in the very midst of its beauteous scenes, only the mist which envelopes its glories has not yet lifted for him. Let him take courage; some day all shall be clear, and he shall know how satisfying the kingdom is.

X.

"Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."—St. John iii. 4-6.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom says: "This birth is too high for the pangs of nature; it hath nothing in common with them; it is indeed called *birth*, but in name only hath it aught in common; in reality it is different. Remove thyself from that which is common and familiar; a different kind of childbirth bring I into the world; in another manner will I have men to be generated: I have come to bring a new manner of creation. I formed man of earth and water: but that which was formed was unprofitable, the vessel was wrenched away; I will no more form them of earth and water, but of water and of the Spirit. . . . That the need of water is absolute and indispensable, you

may learn in this way: On one occasion, when the Spirit had flown down before the water was applied, the Apostle did not stay at this point, but, as though the water were necessary, and not superfluous, observe what he says: *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?*"

And St. Augustine: "Nicodemus knew but the one birth, which is from Adam and Eve; that which is from God and the Church he knew not yet: knew but the parents which gender to death; not yet knew the parents which gender to life: knew but the parents which gender them which shall succeed; not yet knew them, which ever-living gender them which shall abide. Whereas, then, there be two births, he understood one. One is of earth, the other of heaven: one of the flesh, the other of the Spirit; one of mortality, the other of eternity; one of male and female, the other of God and the Church."

Alford says: "At that time two kinds of baptism were known; that of the proselytes, by which they were received into Judaism, and that of John, by which, as in preparatory rite, symbolizing repentance, the people were made ready for Him who was to baptize them with

the Holy Ghost. But both these were significant of one and the same truth; that, namely, of the entire cleansing of the man for the new and spiritual life on which he was to enter, symbolized by water cleansing the outward person. Both were appointed means, the one by the Jewish Church, the other, stamping that first with approval, by God Himself, toward their respective ends. John himself declared his baptism to be incomplete, it was only with water. One was coming who should baptize with the Holy Ghost. That declaration of his is the key to the understanding of this verse; Baptism, complete with water and the Spirit, is the admission into the kingdom of God. Those who have received the outward sign and the spiritual grace, have entered into that kingdom."

The Bible Commentary points out that, "If we regard the specific Biblical ideas of water and Spirit, when they are separated, it will be seen that water symbolizes purification, and Spirit quickening: the one implies a definite, external rite, the other indicates an energetic, internal operation. The two are coördinate, correlative, complementary."

And Stier: "Our Lord's saying rests upon a truth which is fundamentally pre-supposed,

though many find it hard to receive it, that man, according to his first and natural birth, is essentially outside the new element of the kingdom of God and of the Spirit; that there is in him an inborn character opposed to the kingdom of God, and thus that an entrance into it is possible to him only through the merging of the old birth into one entirely new. . . . Human nature is not simply morally weak, but bestially corrupt through inherited and accustomed sin; when the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it in revelation and judgment, all flesh withers like the grass, and its glory like the flower of grass. If all flesh is ever again to know and rejoice in the salvation of God, and to receive the Lord as a Saviour and Redeemer, the Spirit from on high must not merely rebuke from without by law and commandment, but inwardly renew, and make clean, and rectify what was radically wrong. . . . All that which a certain class in the present day vaunt as *the spirit* does indeed belong to the former portion of the sentence in contradistinction to *the Spirit of God*, from whom alone regeneration comes. All the love of the *natural spirit* is now selfishness, or caprice; all its strength, skill, and power are simply impotence as regards the one object of its return to God; all its science

and wisdom were folly and blindness in things which are divine and heavenly. . . . We are but flesh and blood, and all that is of flesh and blood in us must ever fail of the inheritance of the kingdom of God. There must be another experience, through a new birth, in order that we may be able to add, *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*"

First Thought.—One cannot ever cease to marvel at the greatness of the destiny which our Lord here sets before us, and the simplicity of the means whereby that destiny is to be attained. What can be conceived so amazing as eternal life in blessedness for such as we, and what ordinance so easily complied with as holy Baptism! One may say, indeed, that Baptism is but the initial step; ever after it, so long as the life of this world lasts, man must struggle and contend in order not to lose his promised inheritance. We must not overlook the fact, however, that "He giveth more grace," that though temptations beset the believer on every hand, to rob him of his baptismal birth-right, the wealth of the divine help to resist those temptations is ever brought to his hand in ceaseless prodigality. The story is the same throughout the Christian life upon earth; every trial is offset by amazing stores of divine grace

vouchsafed us in the sacraments, quite as simply as the first supply of that grace is bestowed upon us at the font. There is never the smallest ground for discouragement in the Christian life; there is always help from heaven in abundance, and to spare, for every necessity of our spiritual warfare. There is no possible reason why every one of us should not attain to blessedness, if we will but use the same energy of purpose in availing ourselves of God's grace, as the children of this world manifest in laying hold of the things which are likely to promote their temporal welfare.

Second Thought.—It is a solemn truth for all eternity that that which is born of the flesh is flesh. The soul never can get beyond the things of the fleshly life, save by being born again of water and of the Spirit.

1. Man has a fine and indomitable spirit. He fancies that by it he can triumph over every obstacle of this world, in time. Often it chances that adversity breaks that high spirit, and the once proud one becomes as querulous and dependent as a little child. But if the lofty spirit be not thus broken, and man go down to the grave undaunted, how far shall his spirit help him in the world to come? The devils have proud and unbroken spirits, but they are not

thereby delivered from the bottomless pit. Man has a Master Whose will is restless, though it may be defied for the few years of this present world.

2. The body fails with advancing years, and sometimes the mental powers wax feeble with the physical decay, yet often it is true that man goes down to the grave with his mental powers in their fullest activity. Is not the soul, then, at last set free from the body? Nay, it is only disembodied for a time, that it may take on all the characteristics which here had only begun their development. At the last day the hated body shall be brought back again, and then it shall be hideous beyond imagination in the case of all such as have not been born of the Spirit. The soul is compelled to enter that miserable flesh once more, and in it to be tormented in all eternity. That which is born of the flesh is flesh always.

Third Thought.—We may take great comfort to our souls with regard to questions which often trouble us in the thought of the infinite resourcefulness of the Holy Ghost. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. We know that patriarchs and prophets were moved by Him in the old days before there was any Baptism of regeneration. It is easy for Him to pour forth

of His grace outside the boundaries of the Church, if He will. Eldad and Medad, in Moses' day, prophesied without the camp. We must not forget, however, that, although there may be endless variety and degree in the operation of the divine Spirit, there is no way of regeneration revealed, save the way by Baptism; therefore, we may never cease to labour with all our power to bring the nations of the world to this sacrament.

Howbeit, in Eden there were countless types of wholly happy life, in plant existence, in that of beasts and birds and fishes. In heaven, moreover, there are at least nine choirs of angels, and in the ranks of the saints there are doubtless innumerable grades, each in its own happy perfection, for one star differeth from another star in glory. We may reasonably believe, therefore, that, when God shall at the last day make the new heavens and the new earth, there will be found in them place for all types and degrees of blessed creatures, each one perfect according to his kind, and wholly happy. It is certain, however, that none can attain even to what we may call natural beatitude, save by the grace of the Holy Spirit. There may be ways of being born of Him which have not been revealed to us. It is certain that none

can be so born who does not respond in the degree of his capacity to the Spirit's moving.

XI.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."—St. John iii. 7, 8.

Exposition.—The Bible Commentary paraphrases our Lord's words thus: "If, then, this is a necessary law, that the offspring must have the essential nature of the parent, and if the kingdom of God is spiritual, and its citizens therefore spiritual, while the nature of man, as all experience shows it to be, is fleshly, swayed by powers which belong to earth, *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again*, even ye, who think that you have penetrated to the true conception of Messiah's work, and prepared yourselves adequately for judging it and entering into it. There appears also to be in the emphatic *Ye* an implied contrast between the Lord, Who needed no re-birth, and all other men. He does not say, as a human teacher, *We must be born again.*"

Isaac Williams also as follows: "The birth of which I speak is not of that visible and marked character which natural birth is; but the change is no less, from darkness unto light, from Satan unto God. You seem astonished and troubled by what I tell you of birth by the Spirit. Can you understand that most incorporeal of all substances in nature; which you feel, indeed, and hear, but know not the laws by which it is governed? For, though it be of power so great, yet neither is its coming or its going, nor itself visible. Why, then, do you expect to know more of the motions of the Eternal Spirit? A man living by the Spirit of God is a mystery; men cannot comprehend him; they know not the motive from which his actions proceed, nor the end at which they aim."

"If thou art born of the Spirit," says Augustine, "this will be the case with thee, that he who is not yet born of the Spirit will not know of thee from whence thou comest, nor whither thou goest."

"The point of the Lord's answer," says Stier, "consists in its convincing Nicodemus that, as there were many things immediately around him which he knew and understood not, he could not reasonably marvel that some things

incomprehensible pertaining to higher matters were presented to his mind."

St. Chrysostom says: "Though He saith, *It bloweth where it listeth*, He saith it not as if the wind had any power of choice, but declaring that its natural motion cannot be hindered, and is with power. . . . The expression, therefore, is that of one who would show that it cannot be restrained, that it is spread abroad everywhere, and that none can hinder its passing hither and thither, but that it goes abroad with great might, and none is able to turn aside its violence."

And again: "As then the wind is not visible, although it utters a sound, so neither is the birth of that which is spiritual visible to our bodily eyes; yet the wind is a body, although a very subtle one; for whatever is the object of sense is body. If, then, you do not complain because you cannot see this body, and do not on this account disbelieve, why do you when you hear of *the Spirit*, hesitate, and demand such exact accounts, although you act not so in the case of a body?"

Alford puts the matter thus: "We see its effect in ourselves, and others, who have it; but we cannot trace its beginnings, nor can we prescribe to the Holy Spirit His course: He works

in us, and leads us on, accompanying us with His witness, His voice, spiritually discerned."

Stier again says: "The identity of the word in the Greek (for *wind* and *Spirit*), in consequence of which the mention of wind was a continuation of the discourse on the Spirit, makes the comparison all the more striking; but it cannot be reproduced in translation excepting through a paraphrase: The natural spirit, that is, the wind, breathes or blows also in such a manner that thou canst not understand it. . . . Round about the place where the Spirit is are the tokens of His breath, just as every one feels the wind upon his person, and according to its strength, and his own keenness of observation, its voice is also heard."

The Bible Commentary points out that, "The form of the comparison is irregular. The action of the Spirit on the believer is like the action of the wind in the material world. As the tree, for example, by waving branches and rustling leaves witnesses to the power which affects it, *so is every one that hath been born of the Spirit*. The believer shows by deed and word that an invisible influence has moved and inspired him. He is himself a continual sign of the action of the Spirit, which is freely determined, and incomprehensible by man as to

source and end, though seen in its present results."

First Thought.—Nicodemus was bidden not to marvel at the word of the Master: *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit*; for he plainly realized that the kingdom of which our Lord spake was unearthly, supernatural. Man in the flesh never could rise up to the spiritual conditions of the kingdom of God. Just as God gave him natural life in the beginning, and caused each one to enter into its enjoyment by natural birth; so only He could create the spiritual life, and provide a way for birth into it.

We understand far more about the celestial kingdom than Nicodemus could in that day, therefore it ought not to be ground for marveling on our part, that there is required the fashioning of a whole spiritual nature in us before we can enter into, and appreciate, the spiritual realities. This spiritual nature has its birth at the font, therefore the Church holds Baptism to be fundamental to the development in us of the supernatural life, through which alone we can see God.

We believe all of this, but we are apt to lose sight of that which grows out of it. We can

understand the necessity for holy Baptism, but we apparently fail to perceive that the baptismal Gift must be perpetuated and developed in us if it is ever to spiritualize our nature. The supernatural life has for its breath prayer, and all the exercises of devotion. As the natural life must perish without air, so must the spiritual life perish without devotion. It has for its type and model the life of our Master Christ. We can no more come to spiritual maturity without imitating the life of Christ, than we can live a human life other than as men about us live. It has for its food the Blessed Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood. Just as we must soon starve in the natural life if we be deprived of food, so the spiritual life within us must starve if we partake not of Holy Communion. The natural life in its sickness needs the medicines of earth, and the physician's care; so the sin-sick spirit needs the ministrations of the priest in the sacrament of Penance. We ought never to marvel, therefore, at the demand made upon us by our religion for a constantly maintained spirituality.

Second Thought.—Our Lord would remind us how wonderful and inexplicable a thing the breath which we draw is. The air is all about us in abundant supply; we breathe it instinc-

tively, and never think of its mystery. The wind blows, coming we say from north or south, as if that were some explanation of its origin and power; we hear the sound of it in the trees, and know that by its motion the supply of oxygen is always kept for us in abundance. Yet, who understands the vitalizing power of that oxygen, not only for man, but for every breathing thing on the face of the earth, and in the deeps of the sea!

When man's animal life is thus encompassed with mystery, shall we be astonished to find that his soul-life is likewise so encompassed? Who can explain the human spirit, which yearns after greater things than this world can supply? We hear the sound of it, the human voice calling out in all ages for light, but we cannot tell whence our spiritual nature comes, save that it is the gift of God. Evolution cannot account for it. Nor do we know what is its destiny in the ages to come, save that we are persuaded that it is indestructible; we are ever to exist, we cannot cease to be. Man by his own wisdom never yet solved, nor can he solve, the mystery of his spiritual nature.

Third Thought.—But every one who is born of the Spirit is furnished the solution of the marvel. The world cannot comprehend the gift

of the Holy Ghost. It hears the sound thereof in the truths of revelation, the teachings of the divine religion. But the sacramental system is ever the stumbling block of natural wisdom. What power can there be in Baptism, in Confirmation, in Penance, in the Eucharist? The ordinances are all so simple; whence comes their efficacy? Nor can the natural man understand the result which they are to produce, the sanctification of the human soul; it is a meaningless expression. But if we be believers in Christ there is no such difficulty for us. We hear the sound of the Spirit's work in the teachings of revelation, the voice of the Church. We know that sacramental energy flows from the incarnate life of our Master Christ, and that it goes back to Him, uniting His servants who use His grace indissolubly to Him. Therefore we walk by faith, content to pray, to seek to imitate Him, to confess, to partake of the food of the altar, whether we be conscious or not of benefits thus received. Our Master cannot fail us.

XII.

"Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that We have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"—St. John iii. 9-12.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams says: "Even in the Law, are not washings necessary before appearing in God's Presence? And are not your baptisms of proselytes supposed to signify in figure a new birth externally? What if to water in Baptism, God should add an unseen power by His Presence to produce all this that your washings signify? And, surely, not alone to these symbolical baptisms in the Law does our Lord allude, which should have opened the heart of the teacher of Israel to understand. St. Chrysostom well supposes Him to have been referring to all those things well known to an Israelite, which prefigured the new birth in

Baptism. Such was the first formation of man from the ground, and the woman from his side; such were the barren women bearing children beyond nature; such, especially, were things wrought by waters; such was the fountain in which Elijah made the iron to swim; the Red Sea crossed by the Jews; the angel moving the waters of the pool; the cleansing of Naaman the Syrian in the river Jordan. All these things, as in type, declared the birth and the purification which was about to be.

“So also did many things spoken by the prophets; many are the expressions which indicate *a new people that should be born, whom the Lord hath made*; youth renewed as *the eagle*; sin not imputed; unrighteousness forgiven; and the like. All these things should have been known and considered by Nicodemus. The masters in Israel were acutely and deeply versed in the Scriptures, far more so even than the critical expositors among the moderns; but they were entirely ignorant of its spiritual intent and meaning, from want of the love and humility of a serious mind. But our Lord seems to say, You are offended because I speak of things mysterious; you understand not because you believe not; and you believe not because you judge as the carnal man. But, be

assured, He that speaketh from heaven hath evidence far more substantial and sure for what He says than that which the senses furnish to the natural man."

Cornelius a Lapide comments thus upon the use of the plural by our Lord: "*We speak that we do know.*" Christ speaks of Himself in the plural: *What we know we speak*, that is, What I know I speak, for weight of testimony, which is wont to be given by many; and because He would hint that the Father and the Holy Spirit were many witnesses with Himself, Who spake through His mouth. For in Christ *dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead* (and consequently the whole Blessed Trinity) *bodily.*"

Isaac Williams says again: "There seems to be some doubt as to what is intended by these earthly things, in distinction from heavenly. But first, it may be observed that our Lord is here speaking in the plural number; He says, *Ye receive not our testimony*, and therefore it may be said, not of Nicodemus alone, that he received not His testimony, but of the Jews generally, or of the Pharisees. And thus also when He speaks of having told them of earthly things, it is still in the plural. It may perhaps allude to circumstances previous to this conversation. . . . But the whole passage may be

explained with reference to Nicodemus alone; as if He had said, I have as yet used but earthly similitudes to express this entire change of heart, explaining it from washings you are acquainted with, and from the nature of wind: and as you come to learn of me as the Messiah, I would tell you of things infinitely divine; but even those similitudes which I take from earth, from grossness of heart you understand not."

He had been speaking to him, as St. Chrysostom supposes it to mean, in an humble manner of generation here upon earth, which is by water and the Spirit; and explained this power by an earthly similitude of the mind. "Nor need we be surprised," says the same writer, "that He should speak of the new and spiritual birth by Baptism, as of an earthly thing, as He so speaks of it in comparison of what He had wished to explain to him, of His own eternal generation from the Father, and of His coming down into the world; for He was infinitely higher than what Nicodemus had supposed Him, as a mere teacher come from God."

First Thought.—We who have been taught the fulness of the Catholic faith ought all of us to be as "masters of Israel," that is, people able to enlighten and edify their fellow-believers out of their own spiritual experience. So St.

Paul says to the Hebrews, "Ye ought to be teachers." As a matter of fact, the most earnest believers seem very easily and very frequently to lose sight of the spiritual realities underlying their Christian profession.

1. We look at the state of the Church, and profess ourselves greatly discouraged by what we see. There is so little faith, so much worldliness. Believers seem to have succumbed in many instances to the secular spirit; everywhere there is dissension, contention, the absence of the Christ-spirit. How can these things be? we cry. Ought we not to look for just this very condition? Is it not what the Master plainly foretold? Is it not all the time making clear the fact that His religion is supernatural, and continues to do its work in spite of earthly failure? Ought we not to grow stronger in faith, rather than weaker, recognizing the indefectibility of Christ's Body the Church?

2. We direct our attention to the lives of our fellows, and see how few know the faith, how full the world is of unrighted wrongs. How can these things be, if God be good? We ought to know better, as the result of the instruction which we have received, than to speak so. We ought to be able to teach men about us that God has another world in which to right the

wrongs of this, and that here He permits the wrongs to exist, in order that Christ-like souls may be the more urgently moved to do what they can to help their fellows.

3. We are ever talking as if we thought that, in our own lives, things might be much more wisely and kindly ordered than they are. How can these things be? we cry in our dark days. Have we then so poorly learned the Gospel lesson as to forget that Christ is best followed in adversity, not in prosperity?

Second Thought.—There is nothing in all human experience so amazing as the fact that the divinely given revelation of the Gospel should be of so little interest to the vast majority of those to whom it has been made known. The matters with which revelation is concerned, the relation of our souls to God, the things which are to be hereafter, salvation and judgment, must necessarily be matters of the gravest importance to us, yet we give them very little thought indeed. Nor is it that we have any reason to doubt the certainty of the things revealed. We are quite sure that it is our Lord Who has told us the great verities declared in the Gospel; we have no doubt that He is divine; it is not that we do not believe, in the ordinary sense. Yet He says, "Ye receive

not our witness." We are said not to receive it because we do not act upon it; we live as though revelation had never been given from on high. We suffer the supernatural realities to be vague and unreal things to us; they do not touch the deep springs of our lives: this world's interests, its hopes and fears, its ambitions and anxieties, are ever uppermost in our thoughts.

What should be the remedy? Persistent effort to dwell more in thought upon the things which are to come so soon as our few days of earthly life shall end; the effort to live more and more in touch with God by prayer, and the use of the sacraments, in order that we may gradually grow into the realization of the eternal things. So shall we receive our Lord's witness.

Third Thought.—The Master intimates very plainly His desire to reveal far more wonderful things to us than we have yet any conception of, if only we will qualify ourselves for that larger revelation. We must first give proof that we believe the earthly things of His religion: repentance from sin, dependence upon the help of His grace, the duty of imitating Him in our daily walk, the necessity of a willing bearing of the cross. When we have demonstrated

our proficiency in these studies, we shall find Him ready to make known to us the "heavenly" things; the consciousness of what His incarnation means, as we have it brought home to us in the Blessed Sacrament; the consciousness of what His passion means, as brought home to us in our sense of the forgiveness of our sins; the consciousness of what His resurrection means, as brought home to us in the Eucharistic worship of His Church; the consciousness of what His ascension means, as brought home to us in the thought of the Communion of saints; the consciousness of what His eternal reign in heaven means, as brought home to us in the realization of our own everlasting destiny.

XIII.

"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man Which is in heaven."—St. John iii. 13.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams says: "The Son of man is not separate from His Godhead, but though on earth, yet notwithstanding is in heaven. As St. John had said before, *No man hath seen God at any time, the Only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.* Doubtless wherever Christ is, there is heaven. . . . But it may be observed that our Lord seems to speak in a manner similar to that which He does when the Jews at Capernaum disputed carnally of the other sacrament, *What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?* The Son of man *even now in heaven* . . . the Son of man seen *ascending up to heaven*; these high truths may give some apprehension of those lofty and mysterious gifts that are on earth in His sacraments: as He Himself is man, and yet

God; on earth, and in heaven; so in these also are there two worlds, an earthly sign and a hidden Spirit."

St. Chrysostom says: "For since Nicodemus had said, *We know that Thou art a teacher come from God*, on this very point He sets him right, all but saying: Think me not a teacher in such manner as were the many of the prophets who were of earth, for I am come from heaven but now. None of the prophets hath ascended up thither, but I dwell there. Seest thou how, even that which appears very exalted, is utterly unworthy of His greatness? For not in heaven only is He, but everywhere, and He fills all things; but yet He speaks according to the infirmity of His hearer, desiring to lead him up little by little. And in this place He called not the Flesh *Son of man*, but He now named, so to speak, His entire Self from the inferior substance; indeed, this is His wont, to call His whole Person often from His divinity, and often from His humanity."

The Bible Commentary paraphrases the passage thus: "No man hath risen into the region of absolute and eternal truth, so as to look upon it face to face, and in the possession of that knowledge declare it to men; but the Son of man, He in whom humanity is summed up, has

the knowledge which comes from immediate vision. And His elevation is yet more glorious than a mere ascent. He did not mount up to heaven, as if earth were His home, but came down thence out of heaven, as truly dwelling there; and therefore He has inherently the fulness of heavenly knowledge. . . . The exact form of expression is very remarkable. It preserves the continuity of the Lord's personality, and yet does not confound His natures: He that came down from heaven even He Who being incarnate is the Son of man, without ceasing to be what He was before."

Stier also says: "The majestic *Which is in heaven*, is, finally, of deep significance; attributed as it is by our Lord to His whole life in the flesh between the descent and the ascent. . . . God brings heaven with Him wherever He comes; He remains in heaven even in His condition of humiliation, through heavenly society and inward communion with the Father. . . . This Son of man is not only in the kingdom of heaven, but He is already, of His own being, in heaven itself. If now through Him our citizenship may be said to be also in heaven, what must have been the full meaning of this word in relation to Him Whose fellowship with the Father was never suspended?"

And again: "Though *no man* of himself has ever gone up like Him into heaven, yet all who are His through faith shall with Him, and after Him, enter into the kingdom of heaven, into heaven itself."

First Thought.—The Master pronounces a clear and most significant sentence for all human lives when He says that no man hath ascended up to heaven. For we are all of us eager for such ascent. Man cannot be content with a merely temporal destiny, with a kingdom no greater than this world. Our Lord will have us know that for all our yearning there is no possibility of attaining heaven, save through union with Himself. The first man—that is our forefather Adam—was of the earth, earthy. And we earth-born ones cannot get beyond her soil. The sons of Adam cannot reconcile themselves to this fact; there is an unquenchable conviction that we ought to have a higher destiny. We look out upon the stars, and demand that the universe be our inheritance.

1. So men in heathen religions, in all ages, have dreamed their dreams of heaven, and tried to persuade themselves that after this sort or that should be the blessedness of the human soul in eternity. But these conceptions of

heaven have always failed to satisfy the human heart; they cannot convince. Nor has any false religion ever been able to show credibly in what way earth-born man could hope to attain to a celestial destiny.

2. The patriarchs and devout men of the ancient divine religion of Israel laboured to keep God's commandments, yet we are expressly told that they did not by that attain heaven. Though all those great ones, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had long passed away, and although God was not ashamed to be called their God, to acknowledge them as His elect, nevertheless, our Lord expressly declares that, at the time He spake to Nicodemus, no man had yet ascended into heaven. There was something needed to make that ascension possible, which the patriarchs and other holy ones of the Old Testament had not received.

3. Yet God has not mocked His human creature in implanting in his breast this deathless aspiration after heaven. It is satisfied in the religion of our Master Christ. He Who came down from heaven is Lord of heaven, and it is His good pleasure, through our incorporation into His life, to give us the realization of the dream of the race.

Second Thought.—The coming down into the

world of a celestial visitor, the avowed object of Whose descent is to make known to the children of men the way in which they may at last mount up into heaven, ought to attract the attention of the world as nothing else could. As a matter of fact, very few seem to care much for our Lord's having come into the world. Perhaps it is because He came so simply, so humbly, that they do not believe in His power to fulfil that which He promises. Rather it is, that, for all their talk about desiring heaven, men are content to occupy themselves with the things of this world. But it ought not to be so with the believer. He ought to have ever in mind that amazing fact of the Lord's coming down from heaven. Why does it help us so little?

1. Because we think of His abiding in the world as something past; He has gone back again into heaven, and we have only the memory of His stay to comfort ourselves with, the exquisite story of it in the Gospels. We know in our hearts better than that. We know that having once come to earth He abides with His faithful ones. The sacramental life is a true dwelling in His presence, a literal coming into touch with Him. That the senses do not help us to perceive Him is of no consequence when

we have His word that He is still here in our midst. The Blessed Sacrament ought to be the delight of our lives, the constant assurance that He has indeed come down from heaven.

2. Often it is true that we do not find much help in the thought of the incarnation, because we have not learned the *personal* nature of the Master's coming for each individual among His faithful ones. We are to bring this home to our souls by going to Him, directly and personally, claiming His individual attention, His personal help; in our prayers, in our recourse to the sacraments. For it is of the essence of His divinity to give Himself to each one as if there were no other to claim His love and His help. We can speedily find Him to be our very own Lord, if we but go to Him as if He were.

Third Thought.—In seeking thus to make His presence in the world personal to ourselves we find out another very wonderful thing: that He is the Son of man which is in heaven. He is in heaven, even while He is with us on earth, and if we are truly with Him, united to Him in the spiritual bonds of prayer, worship, and sacrament-using, we also are in heaven. There is no delusion about this for the earnest soul. In intercourse with its Lord in prayer, its ears are truly opened to hear celestial sounds, the

deeper meanings of the things revealed in Holy Writ. Its eyes are opened to see, in meditation and worship, the loveliness of the celestial country, which is even now and here below all about us. And in the faithful using of the confessional and Holy Communion, the peace of heaven steals in upon the soul, bringing with it a great content and satisfaction in the consciousness that one truly belongs to the Master, and that nought but wilful sin can separate from Him.

XIV.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—St. John iii. 14-16.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams says: "He seems to add, Here below I am bearing evil; that they who look to me as the Victim for all evil may be saved. This mention of His crucifixion He introduces, as St. Chrysostom thinks, to intimate how His baptism is to have such power, by that life-giving sacrifice for which, by ineffable love, He hath come down from heaven. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up: that every one that believeth on Him may not perish eternally, as they did by temporal death, but may have everlasting life; may turn unto Him, and look unto Him, though He appear but vile in your eyes, even*

as the serpent which had caused their suffering, when lifted up in harmless death; so shall all evil die in thee, and all evil be borne by thee. He was made sin for us Who had no sin. As the serpent represents evil; nay, He was made death for us, Who had in Himself immortality; for by His death He killed death, as by that serpent, lifted up, the power of the serpent should be destroyed.

“‘What are these biting serpents,’ says Augustine, ‘but sins causing death? And what is the serpent lifted up but the death of Christ on the cross? For since from the serpent came death, by the effigy of a serpent is it set forth.’ So also St. Chrysostom, who adds, ‘There a serpent bit, and a serpent healed; and so here death destroyed, and death saved. But the serpent which destroyed had poison; that which saved was free from poison. And so it is here, for the death which destroyed had sin, as the serpent’s poison; the death of the Lord was free from sin, as the serpent of brass was without poison. *For He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.*’”

Stier, on the same verse, writes thus: “As then the remedy of God so profoundly abased itself as to operate in the form of the poisonous serpent, so does the eternal Remedy now conde-

scend to ransom the world in the form of the deepest curse of the world, the Crucified. This is sound and true, nevertheless, all the wonderful influences of this most wonderful paradox must have their root in the Person of Him Who thus, hanging on the cross, became the healing of humanity. He becomes such as the *Son of man*, according to His own simple and significant declaration, that is, *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, in the form of *our sin*, and death, and curse; for men too are called in Scripture serpents, and a generation of vipers."

Of the words, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," St. Chrysostom writes: "What He saith is of this kind: Marvel not that I am to be lifted up that ye may be saved, for this seemeth good to the Father, and He hath so loved you as to give His Son for slaves, and ungrateful slaves. . . . By the expression, *so loved*, and that other, *God the world*, He shows the great strength of His love. Large and infinite was the interval between the two. He, the Immortal, Who is without beginning, the infinite Majesty; they but dust and ashes, full of ten thousand sins, who, ungrateful, have at all times offended Him; and these *He loved*. Again, the words which He added after these are alike signifi-

cant, when He saith, that He *gave His only begotten Son*, not a servant, not an angel, not an archangel. And yet no one would show such anxiety for his own child, as God did for His ungrateful servants."

Stier adds upon the same words: "God *loved*, because He is God, from eternity; such is His nature and His essence. . . . He loves the world, not the universe or creation generally, but *men*, lying in wickedness, the lost world of sinners, which in its sin and darkness hates God, as appeared when His express Image and Likeness was manifested, and experienced *the world hateth me*. When that begins to be understood, the wonder arises anew, and can never cease, in the contemplation of the kindness and love of God to sinners and enemies. From this no man is excluded, but there is consolation and assurance, even for the vilest of those who appertain to this evil world."

First Thought.—The picture presented to the mind in the amazing parallel which our Lord draws between the brazen serpent upon the pole and Himself upon the cross, is almost too solemn and awful to be true; yet it is in perfect harmony with that most touching episode of the Bloody Sweat in the garden of Gethsemane, and the inscrutable mystery of the fourth word of

the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The serpent is ever the type of Satan, and if the brazen serpent becomes a type of the Master, it can only be because the Master has willed to suffer as if wholly surrendered to Satan, and taken possession of by him. Of His own free choice the Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of all the world, and bearing that He died.

That such a thing could be tells us, as nothing else could so well, the exceeding hatefulness of sin, as well as its deadly power to destroy both soul and body in hell. How great, then, ought to be our love for such a Saviour as This, Who was content to bear all the guilt of all the whole world's sin, that we might be saved. We are ready lightly to fancy that sin is not such a terrible thing after all, a natural thing, rather, which no one can wholly help, which God will not severely judge. Can it be a small thing when it caused the Bloody Sweat to flow, the *Eloi* cry to be uttered from the cross? We can never sufficiently love and honour such a Lord as ours.

1. It is easy to talk of love, to give ecstatic expression to it, but what of it in our lives? If we loved our Lord in truth, and appreciated His uplifting as the brazen serpent for us,

should we not bend all our energies to the avoiding of sin in our lives? Who does this? Who gives proof of real love for our gracious Master by giving up all evil courses?

2. We are very weak, we plead, and although we do truly love Him with all our hearts, we seem unable to keep from sometimes lapsing into sin. In that case our love ought to give proof of its reality by our penitence. Yet, alas, penitence seems to hold a very small place in our lives; we grudge the confession of our sins, we grudge the small self-denials our religion calls for, we cry out bitterly if God allow even light trouble to come upon us for our chastising.

Second Thought.—It must always be a mystery to us while we are here in this world, that God has been pleased to make known the Gospel to a part of mankind only, and that, of those who have not heard the message of salvation, nothing is required to escape the pains of hell but loyalty to such light of conscience as has been given them; while of the rest of the world faith in our Lord is demanded, if they would not perish everlastingly. It is a disquieting thing to look forward to perishing, but that must certainly be the fate of all who have heard

the Gospel preached, unless their lives manifest faith in Christ.

It is well that we should not ever lose sight of what is meant by faith in Him. It is much more than the acknowledgment in the heart that all which is revealed to us concerning Him is true; it is the acceptance, in the life, of the responsibilities which grow out of that revelation, and a practical loyalty to them. Only honest discipleship, only true following of our Lord as our Master, can save us from eternal woe.

Third Thought.—Why should God have thus cared for the human race? Why should He not have created man to live his little span of life upon the earth as other creatures and then to pass out of being? Why should He not, when man had lapsed into disobedience, have left him to his fate, as He left the angels which sinned to their fate, instead of seeking to restore the lapsed ones at so great a price as the death of His only-begotten Son? We are given but one answer to such questions—God loved His human creature; He so loved him as to pay this infinite price for his redemption. Are we not, then, bound to love Him without stint in return? Are we not bound to strain every nerve to win that everlasting life which He so

greatly desires we shall attain? All the more is this true, when we consider how alluring is the way of everlasting life which He sets before us, the believing in our Lord, the way of discipleship, the putting into the background of all other aims and ambitions in order that we may devote ourselves to the following of Christ, the imitation of His gracious life. Yet who is there of us all that consistently pursues such an ideal?

XV.

"For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."—St. John iii. 17, 18.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom says: "There are two advents of Christ, that which has been, and that which is to be; and the two are not for the same purpose; the first came to pass, not that He might search into our actions, but that He might remit; the object of the second will be not to remit, but to inquire. . . . Yet His former coming was for judgment, according to the rule of justice. Why? Because before His coming there was a law of nature, and the prophets, and, moreover, a written law, and doctrine, and ten thousand promises, and manifestations of signs, and chastisements, and vengeance, and many other things which might have set men right, and it followed that for all these things He would demand account; but,

because He is merciful, He for a while pardons instead of making enquiry. For had He done so, all would at once have been hurried to perdition."

And Isaac Williams: "There is indeed a coming of the Son of God to judge the world with demonstration of power and glory, as the Pharisees expect, though infinitely beyond their thoughts; but it is not so now; it is to save, not to condemn."

Stier says: "That immeasurable thought that the world might be saved, however certainly the divine counsel provided for it in redemption as possible, is never, alas, reduced to reality. Christ died even for the lost, that they might not and need not *have been* lost; but the world, that is its far greater portion, which must therefore retain its exclusive name in contradistinction to the new Israel, will not be saved *through Him*. The believing alone conditionates and decides all."

And again: "The condemnation is not an external act; it is rather a work which proceeds from a man's self, from within. The hardness of unbelief is already its condemnation, judgment drawn upon themselves by those who believe not. It is not without significance that it is repeated here, *in the name of the only*

begotten Son, for it is precisely against this name of the Son of God, crucified as the Son of man, that unbelief stumbles."

The Bible Commentary makes the same point: It is—"hath not acknowledged Christ as being the only Son of God, such as He is revealed to be. The belief in Christ under this one cardinal aspect leads to the full faith in His person."

Alford says: "The word *only begotten* also here sets before us the hopelessness of such a man's state: he has no other Saviour."

And St. Chrysostom again: "If He came not to judge the world, how is he that believeth not judged already, if the time of judgment has not yet arrived? . . . He announces beforehand what shall be. For as the murderer, though he be not as yet condemned by the decision of the judge, is still condemned by the nature of the thing, so it is with the unbeliever. Since Adam also died on the day that he ate of the tree—for so ran the decree, *In the day that ye eat of the tree, ye shall die*—yet he lived. How then died he? By the decree; by the very nature of the thing; for he who has rendered himself liable to punishment, is under its penalty, and if for a while not actually so, yet is he by the sentence."

First Thought.—Our Lord speaks of His coming into the world as if it must naturally mean the condemnation of the world. That it should mean the world's salvation is a most gracious thing, and one in no wise to have been looked for. For man was created upon the earth to do God's will, to be His faithful servant. Had he proved faithful, had the human race been found by our Lord at His coming devoutly engaged in good works, seeking in every way to glorify the Father in heaven, then He might have been expected to reward and bless those loyal ones.

We know that exactly the opposite of this was true. The larger part of the world was living wholly without God, and almost all men were given over to sin and shameful idolatries. If there were found a few who sought with undivided heart to do the heavenly Father's will, even they were upright only in the eyes of men, and the most indulgent judgment of God. For who is there that ever lives wholly surrendered to the divine service? It is certain that the greatest saints have ever bewailed the imperfection of their service, the coldness of their love. And God has a right to ask for perfect obedience and devotion in the lives of His creatures. Who would keep in his em-

ployment a servant who had long demonstrated his unfitness and unfaithfulness? Therefore it were but natural that the Son of God coming into the world should condemn the world.

How much more is all of this true of ourselves, now that He has come, and has poured out upon His servants the fulness of celestial grace and blessing! We ought to be the most devoted of servants. We ought to have no other thought in life but that of doing His will; all our energies, all our efforts, ought to be centered tirelessly upon the one aim of accomplishing that which He has assigned us. No one lives like that, you say. Therefore it is well to remember that we ought, one and all, to realize that our proper end, in all justice, is condemnation. We certainly are unprofitable servants. Why then should He not reject us, and put others in our place? Yet we speak and think as if, somehow, we might reasonably expect to get to heaven because we are not very bad. It is as if servants should indulge the hope that their master will eventually adopt them as his children and heirs, because they do not do any very dreadful thing, though they are well aware that they are most unfaithful in that master's service. Condemnation is our

due, salvation is only to be hoped for because of God's infinite mercy.

Second Thought.—There ought to be great comfort for earnest Christians in the word of the Master that “he that believeth on Him is not condemned,” for they are sure that they believe on Him. Yet it is not hard to perceive that there is more than one sort of belief. To believe on Him intellectually only, acknowledging Him to be what He is, the Lord Whom we are bound to obey and serve, is manifestly utterly insufficient, and only calculated to increase our condemnation, if we do not faithfully strive to be good disciples. Such belief, St. James tells us, is no more than the devils have, who “believe and tremble.”

Nor is it enough to believe with Christian profession, and the outward practice of Christian obedience, if there be not also unreserved heart-surrender to our Lord. For to believe on Him as He truly is, is to recognize Him as our divine Master, to Whom we owe all we have, all we are, all we hope for; in comparison of Whom nothing else is to be considered for a moment. He is One Who is to be loved with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength.

This heart-belief in our Lord, if it be genuine, must be all-absorbing. We ought to find

that in our lives nothing moves us as the thought of pleasing Him; He is the natural End and Object of our being. We do not yet truly believe on Him unless this be so with us. It does not mean that we shall never fall into sin, for we are very weak; but it does mean that after every fall into sin we return speedily to Him, with deep compunction, with hearty confession, with genuine zeal of amendment. If we believe on Him after this sort, we are not condemned.

Third Thought.—The Master adds very strongly, “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” No life is worth anything without discipleship. Men are fain to claim something for themselves on the ground of good works, that they have lived unselfish lives, devoting themselves and their means to the helping of their fellows. This seems to us very beautiful and Christ-like; but it is not so in the eyes of God if those men have reason to believe our Lord to be the only begotten Son of God come into the world, and they refuse to become His disciples, taking up His cross and following Him with meek and lowly hearts. Good works avail nothing without discipleship. We cannot stand up before

God and make terms with Him on the basis of our philanthropy.

We all of us have great need to call this frequently to mind, for we are ever ready to set our works of mercy to our fellows over against our failures in obedience to Christ. Works of mercy are of immense value to penitents, to humble-hearted followers of the Master in the way of the cross; but they avail nothing to lift such as do not believe out of the way of condemnation.

XVI.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."—St. John iii. 19-21.

Exposition.—St. Augustine says: "The beginning of good works is the confession of evil works. Thou doest truth and comest to the light. What meaneth, *Thou doest truth?* Thou dost not fondle thyself, dost not soothe, not flatter thyself; dost not say, I am just, when thou art unrighteous; and so beginnest to do truth. But thou comest to the light, that thy works may be made manifest that they be wrought in God. Because this very thing, namely, the displeasure thou hast at thy sin, thou wouldest not have at all did not God shine unto thee, and His truth show thee thy sin. But the man who, even being admonished, doth love his sins, hateth the light which admon-

isheth, and fleeth from it, that his evil works which he loveth may not be reprovèd."

And again: "He is ready to forgive sins, but to them who acknowledge their sins: ready, too, to punish them which defend themselves, and boast that they are righteous. . . . But he which walketh in His love and in His mercy, even while delivered from those deadly and huge sins such as are the crimes of murder, theft, adultery, still, because of those which seem to be minute sins, of tongue, or thought, or want of moderation in things permitted, he *doeth truth* of confession, and *cometh to the light* in good works, seeing that many minute sins, if they be neglected, are fatal."

St. Chrysostom says: "He came not to judge, or to enquire, but to pardon and remit transgressions, and to grant salvation through faith. How then fled they? Had He come and sat in His judgment seat, what He said might have seemed reasonable; for he that is conscious to himself of evil deeds, is wont to fly his judge. But, on the contrary, they who have transgressed ever run to one who is pardoning. If, therefore, He came to pardon, those naturally would most hasten to Him who were conscious to themselves of many transgressions; and indeed this was the case with many, for

even publicans and sinners sat at meat with Jesus. What, then, is this which He saith? He saith this of those who choose always to remain in wickedness. He indeed came that He might forgive men's former sins, and secure them against those to come; but since there are some so relaxed, so powerless for the toils of virtue, that they desire to abide by wickedness till their latest breath, and never cease from it, He speaks in this place reflecting upon these."

Stier comments as follows: "What, then, is this darkness which accomplishes so fearful a work as the obscuration and repulsion of the light of God? Not a mere ignorance. . . . No man, since Satan's delusion first betrayed human curiosity, ever prefers ignorance to the enlightenment of his mind. It is *sin*, the evil thing come into man from the Evil One, but which has now established itself in him, and developes itself into one great complex whole of evil deeds. . . . Rieger has excellently said 'Although the deeds which fill up their time may not, in all instances, have a gross and vicious appearance, they are nevertheless foul, contemptible, useless, and without value as regards any results permanent in eternity.'

"To do the truth, in so far as it is here one with *coming to the light*, or rather the internal

principle of that coming, the true act in this critical and decisive doing, can be no other than the first great work of sincerity, which is followed by all other good works, and is the only one which remains in our own power. . . . The acknowledgment and confession was the first work done in God, and all others which ensue flow from that."

Dods says: "The ground of the condemnation lies precisely in this, that since the coming of Christ . . . human sin is no longer the result of ignorance, but of deliberate choice and preference. . . . The reason of this preference of darkness and rejection of Christ is that the life is evil. Underlying the action of men toward Christ during His historical manifestation was a general law; a law which operates wherever men are similarly invited to walk in the light."

The Bible Commentary points out that, "Right action is true thought realized. Every fragment of right done is so much truth made visible. . . . It is not said of the man who doeth truth even that he *loveth* the light. This perhaps could not be said absolutely of man. Action is for him the test of feeling. It must be noticed that the words *cometh to the light* recognize in man a striving towards it. . . . What-

ever may be the imperfections of the deeds of the Christian in themselves, he knows that they were wrought in virtue of his fellowship with God. He is not therefore proudly anxious that they should be tested, and that so the doer may have praise since they abide the test; but looks simply to this, that their spring may be shown."

First Thought.—It has pleased God to send light into the world, into the hearts of men through the voice of conscience; into countries which have not been made to know the truth of His Catholic religion, yet have been given some measure of His revelation of Himself; most of all into lands where the Church has been established, and is day by day plainly declaring the fulness of the Gospel system of salvation. Men cannot escape the responsibility which arises from the presence of the light among them. The heathen will be judged according to God's law written in his heart, the non-Catholic according to the measure of truth which has been offered him, the Catholic according to the requirements of the Church's doctrine.

The Master implies that the deeds of every one of the children of men are evil, and because of this they love darkness rather than light; the light is unwelcome. In this we find the explana-

tion of the hostility of the world to the Church. Men want their own evil way, they do not like to give up the wrong doing of their lives, therefore they make pretence of inability to believe, or of doubt, or of conscientious acceptance of some substitute for the Gospel which requires no high moral standard. The true light is recognized, but it is not welcome, because they are unwilling to amend their sinful ways.

Too often the same thing is true, even of those who call themselves Catholics. They know very well what the Church teaches; they do not have any real doubt that her teaching is God's truth, but to accept it involves the discontinuance of ways of living which they are not willing to give up. Therefore all manner of excuses are found for failure to obey the Church's teaching. It is in truth because darkness is preferred to light.

Second Thought.—Our Lord changes the word which is translated *evil* as He goes on. He says, "For every one that doeth evil—not now flagrantly wicked things, but base, petty, unworthy things, is the force of the original—hateth the light." He would remind us that all things which are unworthy of human nature made in the image of God, as luxurious and self-indulgent living, mere pleasure-seeking and

neglect of devotion, are evil things in His sight. Those who are occupied in such works are not unaware that they are displeasing to Him. They will not come with them into the light, for they are conscious that in the light they will be reproved.

It is most true that that which holds back the majority of people from confession, although they know the sacrament of Penance to be a true part of Christ's religion, is the consciousness that their lives will be reproved. They protest that they do not commit sin, that they do not think confession necessary; as a matter of fact they hate the light, and will not come to it because they know they are living in ways which that light must reprove.

It is well to remember that it will not always be in our power to refuse to come to the light. In the day of the soul's passing it shall be borne out of the darkness into the clear light of the Lord's presence, and in that light every secret thing shall be unsparingly manifested.

Third Thought.—Again, the Master says not, "He that doeth good," but *he that doeth truth* cometh to the light. We know that there is none that doeth good, no, not one. We must all admit that we are vile earth and miserable sinners; nevertheless, the gracious assurance is

that even sin-stained ones may do "the truth," that is, may be straightforward and ingenuous in acknowledging their unworthiness, and seeking pardon for it. Such frank and honest souls come bravely to the light, and confess their sins. And by hearty confession they make manifest their deeds, that they are wrought in God; that is, that the mainspring of their lives is the effort to do God's will. It is easy for the world to find flaws in the lives of devout believers, and to point the finger of scorn at them. Yet even our fellows, if they have any fairness at all, can see that we grieve for our sins, and seek persistently to conquer them. Our deeds are wrought in God when we are genuine penitents. Whether this be manifest to the world is a small matter, however. To heaven's company we are manifested as the doers of the truth, and in the last day all men shall plainly perceive that, though we were sinners, we have been by penitence transformed into saints.

XVII.

"There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink, (For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is That saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."—St. John iv. 7-10.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams comments thus upon the passage: "It was for her faith that He thirsted, says St. Augustine. And Origen, with much depth of thought, 'Perhaps it is a sort of dogma, that no one who asks not can receive a divine gift.' And thus the Father exhorts the Saviour Himself in the Psalm to ask, in order that He might give. *The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son. Desire of me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance; and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession.* And the Saviour saith,

Ask, and it shall be given you; for every one that asketh receiveth. It is extremely interesting and instructive to trace this principle in our Lord's conduct to this woman, and, indeed, in all His dealings with mankind, how He draws her on to ask, in order that He may give. The cup of cold water given unto Him shall not lose its reward, and He is seeking to recompense it with an ineffable requital, even the cup of Salvation."

St. Augustine says: "The gift of God is the Holy Spirit. But as yet He speaketh to the woman covertly, and little by little entereth into her heart. . . . Living water (in our language) commonly signifieth the water which issueth from a spring. That water which is collected from rain into lagoons or cisterns, is not called *living*, that is, running or fresh water. Even if it have flowed from a spring, and stand collected in some place, not admitting to it that from which it flowed, but, by interception of its course, separated as it were from the path of the running spring, it is not called *living water*, but that water is called *living* which is taken as it flows. Such water was in that spring. Then what meant He by promising that for which He was asking?"

St. Chrysostom also: "In Scripture the grace of the Holy Spirit is sometimes called fire, sometimes water, which shows that these words are expressive, not of its substance, but, of its action. The metaphor of fire contains the lively and sin-consuming property of grace; that of water the cleansing of the Spirit, and the refreshing of the souls who receive Him."

And Theophylact: "The grace of the Holy Spirit, then, He calls *living* water, that is, life-giving, refreshing, stirring. For the grace of the Holy Spirit is ever stirring him who does good works, directing the risings of his heart."

The Bible Commentary says: "Had she known what God had now done for men, and who that Jewish Teacher was whom she saw, she would herself have boldly asked of Him a favour far greater than He had asked of her, and would have received it at once: she would have become the petitioner, and not have wondered at the petition: her present difficulty would have been solved by her apprehension of the new revelation which had been made, not to the Jew or Samaritan, but to man. Had she known Who it was that said to her, *Give me to drink*, she would have laid open her prayer to Him without reserve, assured of His sympathy and help.

"The Jews were already familiar with the application of the phrase *living water* to the quickening energies which proceed from God. Here the words indicate that which on the divine side answers to the spiritual thirst, the aspirations of men for fellowship with God. This under various aspects may be regarded as the revelation of the Truth, or the gift of the Holy Spirit, individually, or socially, or whatever, according to varying circumstances, leads to that eternal life which consists in the knowledge of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ."

First Thought.—It is such a simple thing that our Lord asks, a drink of water. Yet how much a drink of water means to the weary and thirsty one in the heat and dust of the summer's day!

1. He has said that the cup of cold water given to one of His little ones, for His sake, shall in no wise lose its reward. By this word to the Samaritan woman, "Give me to drink," He reminds us that we all have it in our power to do a great deal for Him, in the persons of His needy ones, by that which costs us no more than a little kindly effort, a little unselfish thought. There are so many thirsting lives all about us, thirsting for a word of cheer, a friendly smile, a little assurance of help accord-

ing to our ability. It is so easy to invigorate and refresh such thirsting ones, if we will but make the effort; and He counts all such deeds as done to Himself. "I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink."

2. He would represent Himself a weary and thirsty traveller, asking of us a draught of cold water, that is, such signs and tokens of penitence and obedience to Him as satisfy His thirst for our salvation. We cannot begin to appreciate the longing our Lord has for our salvation. Every time we resist a temptation, every time we do a loving, unselfish act, every time we lift up an earnest prayer from the depths of our hearts, every time we manifest true repentance after our falls, we are responding to our Lord's word, "Give me to drink."

On the cross He cried, "I thirst," and it is certain a part, at least, of that thirst was for our souls. Is it not amazing that the Master should come petitioning as a suppliant that we would suffer Him to save us? And if He thirsts so for our salvation, ought we not to be ashamed that we thirst so little for that salvation?

Second Thought.—Why does our Lord thirst thus for us? Because we are His creatures; He loves us as a father his children, but His

love has in it a special yearning, because of that which redemption means for us; "If thou knewest the gift of God," He says to the Samaritan woman, "and Who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink." The thirst of our Lord for souls is inconceivably great because He knows, as we never can know in this world, what the gift of God, which is our salvation through the gracious work of the Holy Ghost, means. And He knows, as we never can know in this world, what He Himself might be to us, as our Saviour. He who thirsts for us is both God and man. We believe that; we may be said to know it, yet how little we do truly know of the wealth of divine goodness and mercy brought to us in the person of our Lord, through His incarnation.

The Samaritan woman could not know such wonderful things as these, of course, nor can we at this present time; yet, the fact that the Master spake as He did to her, is a sure prophecy that human nature, by loyalty to the gift of God, and through union with Himself, may come to know even this. How much more we know to-day in our Christian experience of the gift of grace, and of the person of our Lord, than we did in the beginning of our earnestness of living! How much more we may yet come

to know, even while we are here in this world ! Therefore it ought to be our constant study and delight to meditate upon the gift of God, our redemption and our sanctification by the Holy Ghost, and what Christ our Lord is to us as the End and the Glory of our being.

Third Thought.—We sigh and long to have practical experience of the gift of God, and knowledge of the Master Christ; nevertheless, instead of advancing on to that perfect condition of discipleship, we seem perpetually to be slipping back. Yet His remedy for our frailty is very simple: "Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

This asking of Him for the living water is carried out in the daily use of the devotional ways of the Church, prayer, sacraments, good works. So do the wretched of this world silently ask aid of him who has shown himself their benefactor, by crowding about his abode, waiting for him to dispense his bounty, as Lazarus was laid daily at the gate of Dives.

The "living water" is every good gift of His which satisfies the thirst of our souls. We are greatly troubled because of our sins; He freely dispenses the living water of His absolution. We lament our helplessness, our utter inability

to cope with the hard problems of our lives; He graciously instils into our hearts the satisfying dew of the sense of His goodness and ready help, upon which we may fearlessly depend. We long for some vision of the future; He very pityingly gives us to drink of the refreshing fountain of those promises of His which cannot fail.

XVIII.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."—St. John iv. 13, 14.

Exposition.—St. Augustine says: "Still that woman savours the things of the flesh: she was charmed with the thought of thirsting no more, and imagined that this thing was promised her by the Lord in respect of the flesh. Glad were she to have no want, glad to have no toil. To be continually coming to that spring, to burden herself with the weight, that the want might be supplied thereby, and when that which she had drawn was spent to come back once more; this she was forced to do, and day by day had she this toil, because that want of theirs was but relieved, not put an end to. Charmed therefore with the thought of such a boon, she asks Him to give her the living water."

And again: "The water in the well is the pleasure of the world in its dark depth; from

this depth men draw it with the water-vessel of lusts. Bending downward, they let down the lust that they may get at the pleasure drawn from the depth below, and enjoy the pleasure which the foregoing lust was sent to fetch. Put then the vessel to mean lust; and the water from the depth of the well, pleasure; when each hath got at the pleasure of this world . . . it is meat, it is drink, is bathing, is sight-seeing, is an amour; what then? Will he not thirst again?"

St. Chrysostom says: "He calleth the Spirit by the name of fire, alluding to the rousing and warning property of grace, and its power of destroying transgressions; but by that of *water*, to declare the cleansing wrought by it, and the great refreshment which it affordeth to those minds which receive it. And with good reason; for it makes the willing soul like some garden thick with all manner of trees, fruitful and ever-flourishing, allowing it neither to feel despondency nor the plots of Satan, and quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one."

Isaac Williams writes in the same vein: "The Spirit that proceedeth from the Father and the Son is the water which Christ will give. The fountain of life in mortal man fails; but that fountain of life which is in the Spirit never

fails, but springs up to immortality; for that fountain no one can fathom, nor know the depth nor the circumference thereof. And this water, of which he that drinks shall thirst again, is a type of all earthly desires; for nothing upon earth can satisfy the cravings of an immortal spirit, which being made for God can find rest in Him alone."

Stier says: "Human language generally has adopted thirst as the common expression for desire of every kind. All carnal pleasure, such as this woman lived in; all that fleshly and unfruitful knowledge which so many men pursue; all delights and all enjoyments which the earth, *this world* may offer, can satisfy our thirst with a brief and transitory gratification alone, such as only in reality increases the thirst-sickness which it professes to allay."

And the Bible Commentary: "The image is developed in three stages: Christ's gift is as a spring of water, of water leaping up in rich abundance, and that not perishing or lost, but going forth to the noblest fulfilment. The original words for *springing up into* describe the 'leaping' of a thing of life, and not the mere 'gushing up' of a fountain."

Lange adds: "We understand by the words a flowing-on of this well into the eternal life of

perfect fellowship with God in the world to come. This eternal life is doubtless conceived in the figure as an ocean (into which all the rivers of life of individual believers empty at last). The fountain leaps into eternal life. The water drank becomes a well, the well a fountain, which incessantly flows into the ocean of eternal life."

First Thought.—The children of this world are ever seeking satisfaction, seeking to still the craving of their souls for peace and contentment, for love and happiness which may endure. They dream of quenching this soul thirst in abundance of wealth, in earthly loves and friendships, in pleasures which shall not pall, in ambitions which shall know no sting; but they never realize such dreams. It is the lot of all the wells of earthly ideals to cause those who drink of them to thirst again, and after each draught to thirst yet more intensely. The rich must acquire larger wealth, the lover must have more perfect love, the friend more ideal friendship, the ambitious more worlds to conquer. No one is ever content with anything which earth can supply. When men seem content, and protest that they are, it is but for a little while; their paradise is soon wrecked by bereavement or adversity.

It is true, indeed, that we were meant to find much happiness in the good gifts of God to us here below ; and we are enjoined to live in contentment, with hearts full of gratitude for our many mercies. Nevertheless, such happiness and contentment in the believer can only arise from the consciousness of being in touch with God, living in the state of grace. Then the earthly things take on a certain glory of heavenliness, and become transformed by the presence of God in our lives behind them all. If, after a while, earthly blessings be taken away, the happiness and contentment ought to remain, because God's presence cannot be taken from us, save by our own sin. It is the part of wise Christians often to put their lives to the proof by self-denials, to find out whether the joy which is theirs rests in temporal good things, or in their daily communing with God.

Second Thought.—It is unnecessary that there should be any confusion in our minds concerning the water which the Master promises His faithful ones, because some speak of it as the Holy Ghost, others as divine grace, and yet others as our Lord Himself. For in giving His grace the Holy Ghost truly gives Himself, and the fulness of His grace is nothing less than perfect union with Christ, so it

is only that we have three ways of expressing the same thing. If we be in sacramental union with our Lord, which is effected by the Holy Ghost working in us, we have been given to drink of the living water. We are here promised that we shall never thirst, having been thus refreshed. But in what sense never thirst? The psalmist was athirst for God; the Master said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness"; He Himself on the cross cried, "I thirst."

Men may be said to thirst when, after waiting a great while for water, they are parched and fevered with longing for a draught of it; or they may be said to thirst when, having been afforded abundance of sweet water to quench all their dryness, they yet desire more for the very sweetness of it; as sometimes in the country one comes upon a spring of water so delicious that one drinks and drinks again, just because it is exceeding good, though thirst was quenched by the first few draughts. God's servants, sustained by grace, can know no carnal and painful thirst, but only a ceaseless longing to quaff more abundantly of His goodness.

1. No matter how grievous the affliction the believer be called upon to bear, wrestling with his trial in prayer, he rises from his knees at

last quite satisfied, glad to have things just as they are.

2. No matter how cruel the strain put upon him by the tempter, he issues from the confessional with a great sense of calm. He has drunk of the celestial water, and thirsts no longer.

3. No matter how dark the vision of this world's future may be for him, he comes back from the altar having seen his Lord face to face, and is at peace; he cannot thirst after that.

Third Thought.—Exquisitely does our Lord depict the vitality of the water of His grace, which He bestows freely upon all who truly thirst for it.

1. It becomes a *well* of water in the life of the believer, of which others may drink, and find blessed quenching of their thirst. Who can tell the amount of help and comfort, of spiritual uplifting and celestial strength, which is supplied to his fellow Christians by the devout life of the faithful servant of Christ, simply living by the grace of the sacraments!

2. It leaps up as a strong fountain, even into everlasting life. One may think of some noble spring of crystal water, far down beneath a broad, mountain lake, imprisoned in the rock,

yet striving ceaselessly to be free, until at last it cuts for itself a way into the bed of that great lake, and sends forth its glad waters, leaping up tumultuously to spread themselves far and wide upon its shining bosom. So does the soul which has drunk of the grace of the Holy Spirit, and has come to have part in the life of Christ, find its way through every obstacle, even unto the infinite ocean of the divine bliss. While we are yet in this world we may in heart and mind ascend through grace to the paradise of God. What, then, shall be our delight in the upleaping of the fountain of our life at the last day into the calm sea of the Beatific Vision?

XIX.

"The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."—St. John iv. 15-18.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams says: "No doubt our Lord saw some good thing in her, as in the sinner who loved much, and in the penitent thief who believed much; so is her character throughout marked with good. The gentleness with which she first received the request of a Jewish stranger, her pious memory of the patriarch Jacob, her readiness to believe, her expressions of respect throughout, saying, Master; her uncalled for confession that it was not her husband, and apparent innocence on that subject, when she found herself before a Prophet; her immediate inquiry respecting a point which was evidently nearest her heart, of

the most acceptable mode of worshipping God; the fulness of her faith afterwards; and the expressions which show that she was evidently one of those who waited for the consolation of Israel; all these things prove that, although like many others she may have been chosen under circumstances apparently the most adverse, yet that in the main her heart was right toward God; the shadow of Gerizim, the mount of blessing, was still upon her: for she had the blessing of the pure in heart, eyes to discern God; . . . and the blessing of being filled with that righteousness for which she thirsted; . . . for our Lord thought her worthy of high and mysterious discourse; and even made unto her a full and most unwonted revelation of Himself as the Christ."

"She asks not," says St. Chrysostom, "of health, or of riches, but immediately of doctrines of faith." "She honoured the patriarch, but already," says the same author, "she prefers Him to Jacob: as if saying, I need not this fountain, if I may but obtain that water." And again, "The woman immediately believed, and showed herself more wise than Nicodemus; and not only more wise, but also more courageous. For he, although he heard many such things, neither invited any one else, nor himself spake

with confidence. But she takes on her the office of an Apostle, announcing it to all, and inviting them to Jesus."

St. Augustine says: "It seems to me that we may take the five former husbands of the soul to be the five senses of the body. For when a person is born, before he is able to use the mind and reason, he is ruled only by the senses of the flesh. . . . According to these five senses, which are as five husbands, the soul first liveth because it is ruled by these. But why are they called husbands? Because they are in their legitimate office: for they were made by God, and by God given the soul. The soul is weak as yet, while it is ruled by these five senses, and lives under these five husbands; but when she has come to years of putting forth the reason, if she be taken in hand by the most excellent discipline and teaching of Wisdom, those five husbands are succeeded in their rule only by the true husband, the lawful one, and, better than they, one who shall both rule better, and who shall rule unto eternity.

"This husband had not yet succeeded to those five husbands in this woman. Now where he succeedeth not, error hath the mastery. For when once the soul has begun to be capable of reason, it is ruled either by the wise mind or

by error; howbeit, error ruleth not, but undoeth. So then that woman was still erring after these five senses, and error, like a wind, was carrying her to and fro. Now error was not lawful husband, but paramour: therefore the Lord saith to her, *Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands*; the five senses of the flesh at the first ruled thee; thou art come to the age of using reason, yet not come into wisdom, but fallen into error. Therefore, after those five husbands, he whom thou now hast is not thy husband. And if not husband, what was he but paramour? Call then not thy paramour, but *thine husband*; that by the understanding thou mayest comprehend me, and not by error have some false notions concerning me."

Dods also: "In response to her request, Jesus gives her now the first draught of the living water, by causing her to face her guilty life, and bring it to Him. He cannot give the water before thirst for it is awakened. The sure way to awaken the thirst is to make her acknowledge herself a sinful woman. She shrinks from exposure, and replies, I have no husband. A literal truth, but scarcely honest in intention. Jesus at once veils her deceit, and disposes of her equivocation by emphasizing the word *hus-*

band. Thou hast well said, I have no husband, for he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."

First Thought.—In the full mystical sense of the spiritual writers, our Lord Himself is the Spouse of the soul; but as the matter is here to be understood, the husband which the soul of the servant of Christ should have is the Holy Ghost. He should be the strength and the protection of the soul, her head. He should be the confidant and sympathetic companion of the soul, to whom she should ever turn naturally for solace and comfort. He should be the centre of the soul's affection, upon whom her love is settled for ever. The soul was affianced to the Holy Spirit of God at Baptism; the marriage bond was completed at Confirmation. It is only as we are thus wholly united to the Blessed Spirit that we can continue true servants of our Master Christ. Therefore, whenever we would come to Him, desiring some celestial gift, as this woman of Samaria desired the living water, He bids the soul first call her husband. For it is impossible for us to receive supernatural things save through His coöperation.

The soul unaided by the Holy Ghost can assimilate no spiritual gift. Therefore the Church

requires all those who would be partakers of the Holy Communion first to be confirmed, that, by the aid of the sevenfold gift of the Spirit, they may be able to appropriate the heavenly gift of the altar; only the sanctified can partake profitably of such unearthly things. The soul is bidden, indeed, by the Gracious Master to come, but His word is not merely that; it is "Go, call thy husband, and come." It is as if He had said, "Unless mind and heart are truly guided by and stayed on the Holy Ghost, as a wife on her husband, it is vain to come seeking the celestial gifts."

Second Thought.—Very often it is true that the soul must reply, "I have no husband." It may, indeed, be that we were washed at the font, and given the Holy Ghost in regeneration. It may still further be that the Bishop's hand was laid on us, and the fulness of the Spirit's sevenfold gift imparted through Confirmation: the soul was truly married to the Holy Ghost, yet no longer can she claim Him as the strength, the comfort, the joy of her life. He has ceased to be her husband. What is the explanation of that? It is that the soul has not been true to her marriage vow, but has left her celestial Spouse, acknowledging Him no longer.

1. Very often the trouble has arisen from

gradual neglect of the sacramental life. Marriage with the Holy Ghost requires for its maintenance the living in close touch with the heavenly things. He cannot desert the city of God to dwell in the tents of this world. If the soul will not abide in heavenly dwelling places, she cannot hope to live with Him as with an husband.

2. At other times the fault is lack of reality and earnestness in one's religion. We may be devout outwardly, yet full of indevotion and earthliness within. The divine Spouse is the Holy *Spirit*, and just so soon as we suffer spirituality to go out of our lives, we cut ourselves off from Him.

3. Yet again the unhappy separation of the soul from her celestial Spouse is brought about by sin. He is all pure, He cannot tolerate wilful transgression. Just so soon as we allow ourselves to fall into conscious sin, and do not strive with all earnestness to put it away by repentance, and to shun it for the future, we must forfeit the abiding with us of the Holy Ghost.

Third Thought.—The Master reminds us, even as He reminded that Samaritan woman of old, of the truth concerning our lives. We are ever ready to forget it.

1. "Thou hast had five husbands," He says to the soul; thou wast guided in the natural life by the senses, until the divine grace brought thee into the way of life. The believer cannot be any longer as those who have never been taught the Gospel story.

2. "He whom thou now hast is not thy husband." How often it is true that in Christian lives some other has been suffered to usurp the place of the Holy Spirit. It may be it is the ever-pressing care and responsibility with which the lives of some are filled, the hardness of the struggle for existence, which has forced out the divine Spouse. Or, perhaps it is the absorbing success of this world, that unlawful husband *ambition*, which has destroyed the spirituality which once filled the soul. In other cases it is the intoxication of pleasure—often unlawful pleasure—which has dispossessed the Holy Ghost. Let us hear the Master's word: "He whom thou now hast is not thy husband"; for this is always true if it be other than the divine Spirit to whom the soul was wedded in Baptism and Confirmation.

XX.

"The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, not yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews."—St. John iv. 19-22.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom says: "Thus He declared that the Jews were more honourable, not preferring place to place, but giving them the precedence because of their intention. As though He had said, About the *place* of worship ye have no need henceforth to dispute, but in the *manner* the Jews have an advantage over you Samaritans. How then did the Samaritans know not what they worshipped? Because they thought that God was local and partial; so, at least, they served Him, and so they sent to the Persians, and reported that the God of this place is wroth with us, in this respect forming

no higher opinion of Him than of their idols. Wherefore they continued to serve both Him and devils, joining things which ought not to be joined. The Jews, on the contrary, were free from this supposition, at least the greater part of them, and knew that He was God of the world."

And Origen: "The Samaritans regarded Mount Gerizim, near which Jacob dwelt, as sacred, and worshipped upon it; while the sacred place of the Jews was Mount Zion, God's own choice. The Jews, being the people from whom salvation came, are the type of true believers; the Samaritans of heretics. Gerizim, which signifies division, becomes the Samaritans; Zion, which signifies watch-tower, becomes the Jews."

Sadler says: "The exclamation of the Lord, *Believe me*, is unique. It implies a great and difficult truth declared, and great earnestness in declaring it. For the Lord was now, once for all, setting aside what had hitherto been a great principle in all human worship, that it should be local. The Jewish worship was strictly local; it was to be where God had set His Name, and nowhere else. When the Samaritans set up their schism, instead of asserting any wider principle, they merely substi-

tuted Gerizim for Jerusalem. Now the Lord declares the near fulfilment of the prediction of the last prophet, *From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure offering.*

"We know what we worship. Not that every nominal Jew knew God, but that those who desired had the means of doing so in a system which possessed the covenants, the service, and the promises. . . . *We know.* Notice the plural *we.* On almost every other occasion He speaks as one apart from the Jews, because He has to reprove their apostasy from His Father, so that they could not be regarded as the true spiritual children of God; but now, when He is face to face with one of another race and religion, He asserts His identity with them, and makes Himself their representative, inasmuch as they were still the elect of God."

And Isaac Williams: *"Ye worship ye know not what;* neither Law nor prophets are yours to teach you what to worship, for ye have neither the sacrificial ordinances of Moses, nor the more spiritual teaching of the prophets, which ye own not; but the Jews have both. *We,* speaking of Himself also in the person of

a Jew, as He fulfilled all the righteousness of legal worship, *We know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews*. Much every way is theirs; for theirs are the oracles of God, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ comes."

So St. Chrysostom also: "What He saith is of this kind: Either, that blessings to the world came from the Jews (for to know God and to condemn idols had its beginning from them, and with you Samaritans the very act of worship, although ye do it not rightly, yet received its origin from them), or else, He speaketh of His own coming. Or rather, one would not be wrong in calling both these things *salvation* which He said was *of the Jews*; which Paul implied when he said, *Of whom is Christ according to the flesh, Who is God over all*. Seest thou how He commendeth the old Covenant, and sheweth that it is the root of blessings, and that He is throughout not opposed to the Law, since He maketh the groundwork of all good things to come from the Jews?"

First Thought.—The notion of the mountain, and of the holy city, as especially suitable places

for the gathering of men to worship God, is a natural and a right one. Our Lord does not take it away, but only makes it appropriate to all mankind. The hour was then at hand in the which any particular mountain, or any especial city should cease to be thus sanctified. For He was about to set up the mountain of His holy altar in the Catholic Church throughout the world, and to constitute that Church herself His holy city for His people everywhere. The Christian altar is ever mystically God's mount, the perpetuation of that mountain of Calvary on which He was crucified, the mount which His people ascend by devout prayer and worship, coming up far above the world's din and trouble into His very presence on the mountain-top.

And the Church is His holy city, the company of the faithful among whom He loves to dwell, the celestial Jerusalem; within the mystic walls of which we are dwelling because of our membership in Christ; into the very heart of which we come in devout prayer and worship, and in the rendering of service to our Lord. The mountain of the altar, and the city of the celestial hosts, are ours; they are the possession of all throughout the whole world who are true to Christ in His religion.

How great heed ought we to give that our worship be indeed *upon the mountain*, that in time of prayer and holy service we be uplifted in heart and mind from all sinful and worldly things, pure and untainted in spirit to lay hold upon so great a privilege thus accorded us! And how careful we should be to enter at such times *into the heavenly Jerusalem*, bringing home to our hearts the consciousness of the celestial company which surrounds us, that we may worthily, with willing spirit and fitting demeanour, bear our part in the homage of that glorious host of God!

Second Thought.—If it were true of the Samaritans and Jews of old that the former worshipped they knew not what, while the Jews knew that they worshipped the one true God in the way which He had appointed, how much more is it true in these days, that non-Catholics know not what they worship, while Catholics know that they worship the Divine Three in One in the way our Master Christ has appointed. It is well for us often to call to mind just what our faith is, and what it involves of obligation on our part.

1. In believing as we do, we cannot forget the mysteries of redemption and sanctification, which are inseparable from our belief in the

doctrine of the Trinity, the Son and the Holy Ghost along with the Father. There is the wonder of the cross, which can never be forgotten by us; there are the miracles of the sacramental life, which cannot but enkindle our enthusiasm. The death of our Lord upon the cross must always mean for us the bearing of the cross, if we would follow Him. The wonderful truths which we have been taught concerning the sacraments but ensure our condemnation, if we be not devout users of the sacraments. How great responsibility grows out of the vastness of our privilege!

2. In a very especial sense we know what we worship in having the Blessed Sacrament as the centre and all important fact of our service in the sanctuary. It may seem hard to believe so great a mystery, but we have its truth upon the testimony of our Lord Himself. We *know* what we worship when we adore the Host, for He has said, "This is My Body." It is a fearful thing to have the Blessed Sacrament in our midst as we do, to be permitted as we are to feed upon the Lord's own Flesh and Blood, unless we take heed always to be well aware of such solemn realities, and to conduct ourselves fittingly in the sacred Presence. It is but a curse to us to know what we worship,

if we strive not to live up to that knowledge.

Third Thought. If salvation were of the Jews in the beginning of the Gospel, how much more is it of the Catholic Church in these days!

1. Therefore we ought to exult in the Church, to delight in her more and more, to speak of her in terms of the utmost admiration and loving affection, to be eager in every way in our power to glorify her, to make her fabrics more precious, her services more majestic. She is the mother of salvation.

2. If we realize the blessedness of that salvation, our hearts and mind ought to be full of the desire to make it known to those who have not yet embraced it, perhaps not even heard of it. What could be more selfish than the attitude of the Christian who is happy in the thought of his fellowship in Christ, yet does nothing to further the Church's missions, to carry salvation to those who know not the name of their Saviour?

3. Our joy in Christ must ever be tempered with the consciousness that it is possible for us, so long as we are in this world, to forfeit our salvation, to be lost, even after we have

been saved. Therefore the right-minded believer never relaxes for a single day his efforts to make his calling and election sure.

XXI.

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."—St. John iv. 23, 24.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams paraphrases the passage thus: "Not by the mere letter of the commandments, but with that love of God which shall fulfil those commandments in the spirit: not with those rites, such as circumcision, and burnt offerings, and incense, and ablutions, which are but the shadows; but with that truth which they signify: with all things which pertain to the true Sacrifice and the true Tabernacle. The true circumcision which is *that of the heart, not in the letter, but in the spirit*, by ministers, not of the letter, but of the spirit: and by all those sacramental ordinances of the Church, in which will be found the spirit and truth of those things which were foreshadowed by the Law. When, as the prophet Malachi foretold, *from the rising of the sun,*

even unto the going down of the same . . . in every place incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure offering."

Origen says: "The words *the hour cometh* are repeated: the second time with the addition *and now is*. I think that the first expression signifies the most perfect worship that human nature is capable of in this life. So, until the hour shall have come which the Lord speaks of, the mountain of the Samaritans (who represent those who separate themselves from the Church) is to be avoided, and God must be worshipped in Sion at Jerusalem, which Christ calls the city of the Great King. What is this but the Church, where the holy offerings of spiritual victims are presented by men of spiritual minds? But when the fulness of time shall have come, the true worship will no longer be performed in Jerusalem, that is in the present Church."

And again, of the Father *seeking* the true worshippers, he says: "He seeks them through *Jesus, Who came to seek and to save that which was lost*, and to teach men what true worship was."

St. Chrysostom comments thus: "He declareth nothing else than His incorporeal nature. Now the service of that which is incor-

poreal must needs be of the same character, and must be offered by that in us which is incorporeal, to wit, the soul, and purity of mind. Wherefore He saith, *They that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.* For because both Samaritans and Jews were careless about the soul, but took great pains about the body, cleansing it in divers ways, 'It is not,' He saith, 'by purity of body, but by that which is incorporeal in us, namely the mind, that the Incorporeal One is served. Sacrifice, then, not sheep and calves, but dedicate thyself to the Lord; make thyself a holocaust; His is to offer a living sacrifice.' "

And St. Augustine: "If perchance thou seekest some high place, some holy place, make thee a temple for God within. *For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.* In a temple wouldest thou pray? Pray within thyself. Only first be thou a temple of God, because He in His temple will hear him that prayeth."

Sadler says: "The words *in spirit and in truth* have of necessity two meanings, a lower and a higher one. First, with evident reference to what the Lord has just said, they mean that worship henceforth is not to be local, but in spirit. The human soul or spirit is now henceforth to be, if we may use the words, the

place or sphere of worship: so that unless worship is offered there, it is not true worship. And if offered there, if it is the product of our spirits, it is in truth, that is, true and sincere worship. The only true worship is that which is independent of outward place and circumstance. But we cannot be content with this exposition. The teaching of Christ through the Spirit in the Apostles, assures us that the Holy Spirit is given us that, in and through Him, we may *pray in the Holy Ghost*. He pervades our spirits, and shows us our needs, and prompts and chastens each aspiration, and excites the desires, and gives warmth, and earnestness, and energy to our souls. Thus He helpeth our infirmities, and we pray in the Spirit.

“There can be no *truth* in worship except prayer be according to *the* truth of the Gospel. The only true conception of the God whom we worship is given to us through the Gospel. Through *the faith once delivered to the saints* we know the nature, the love, the eternal Fatherhood of God, and His reconciliation of our race to Himself through the redemption of Christ. For us to worship God in *the* truth, is to worship Him relying on the Atonement and perpetual Intercession of His Son. . . . *The*

Father seeketh such to worship Him. Worship is converse with God. God has made His creatures capable of both knowing Him and holding converse with Him; and here His Son assures us that the Father is not indifferent to, but looks for, the loving, intelligent, free converse of us His children."

First Thought.—The time has come in which the true worshippers are to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Who, then, are these true worshippers? The world is full of nominal Christians, yet it is to be suspected that many of them are not in earnest in their religion. It concerns us personally to make sure that we are of the number of those whom God reckons true worshippers. Our Lord tells us how we are to test the matter; true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

1. To worship in spirit is to surrender one's whole inner being to Christ. It is the work of the will to do this, and we may never relax our efforts to bring our whole nature into the attitude of loving worship of God.

2. To worship in truth, for the individual, means to bring one's outward life into conformity with the loyal aspirations of the soul. Again, the will must be the moving principle in this sort of worship; for our nature is very

weak, our outward part slow to respond to the devout impulse of the soul. We are not worshippers in truth unless, in heaven's eyes, we are ceaselessly striving to bring our daily conduct into complete obedience to the law of Christ.

Second Thought.—Our Lord declares that the Father seeketh such true worshippers. Why should He seek them? Of what consequence can our worship be to Him Whom countless legions of glorious spirits ever adore in heaven; to Whom the whole universe does homage unceasingly? Plainly, not for His own sake does God seek for true worshippers among the children of men. Yet, in a sense, He does seek them for His own sake, because of the love of the Father for His offspring. It must ever remain a mystery that God should condescend to love such creatures as we; yet we cannot doubt the greatness of His love, because it is measured by the sacrifice of our Lord Christ upon the cross, and by the tireless work of the Holy Ghost in the sanctification of our souls.

So the Father is ever seeking for true worshippers among the children of men by means of the loving work of our Saviour Christ, drawing us to Himself by the might of His cross, and by the ceaseless labours of the Holy Ghost

in the sacramental life. He knows that which it is so hard for us now to realize, that only in worshipping Him can we find genuine and lasting happiness. He seeks true worshippers because He would have His human creatures share the bliss of His life in heaven, and only by becoming true worshippers can we hope to do this. Could we but realize how great things depend upon our fidelity in worship, we should strive far harder than we ever do to make all our lives a worshipping of the Father in spirit and in truth.

Third Thought.—For God is pure Spirit, the great all-pervading Reality, of Whom are all things, for Whom are all things. Only that which is genuinely spiritual, only that which is absolutely true, can come into touch with Him. Therefore, it would seem hopeless for us to aspire ever to render Him such worship as be-seems Him. It were so, indeed, but for the gracious work on our behalf of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

1. To worship the Father in spirit is to worship Him in the sanctifying energy of the Holy Ghost. Baptized at the font, we were filled with His might. Confirmed by the bishop's hand, we were made strong with His sevenfold gift. If we remain true to our Christian pro-

fession we are never left to fight sin alone, but always in the might of the Spirit. Our prayers, our worship, all our service is resistlessly prevailing, because offered in the power of the Holy Ghost. So we worship in the Spirit.

2. To worship the Father in truth must be to worship Him as He was worshipped on Calvary, when the cross was lifted up with its holy Burden. This is veritably reproduced for us in the divine Eucharist. By taking our appointed part in that sublime service, we most perfectly worship the Father *in truth*.

XXII.

"The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He comes, He will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He."—St. John iv. 25, 26.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom says: "Whence came the Samaritans to expect the coming of Christ, seeing that they received Moses only? From the writings of Moses themselves. For even in the beginning He revealed the Son. *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*, was said to the Son. It was He Who talked with Abraham in the tent. And Jacob prophesying concerning Him said, *A ruler shall not fail from Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until He come for Whom it is reserved, and He is the Expectation of nations*. And Moses himself saith, *The Lord thy God will raise up unto you a Prophet of your brethren like unto me, unto Him shall ye hearken*. And the circumstances attending the serpent, and the rod of Moses, and Isaac, and the sheep, and

many other things, they who chose might select as proclaiming His coming.

“She was a poor, ignorant woman, unpractised in the Scriptures. Wherefore He doth not speak unto her from them, but draweth her on by the *water* and by prophecy, and bringeth her to make mention of Christ, and then revealeth Himself; which, had He at first told the woman, when she had not questioned Him, He would have seemed to her to trifle and talk idly; while as it is, by bringing her little by little to mention Him, at a fitting time He revealed Himself. To the Jews, who continually said, *How long dost Thou make us to doubt? tell us if Thou art the Christ*, to them He gave no clear answer, but to this woman He said plainly that He is.

“For the woman was more fair-minded than the Jews; they did not enquire to learn, but always to mock at Him; for had they desired to learn, the teaching which was by His words, and by the Scriptures, and by His miracles would have been sufficient. The woman, on the contrary, said what she said from an impartial judgment and a simple mind, as is plain from what she did afterward; for she both heard and believed, and netted others also, and in every

circumstance we may observe the carefulness and faith of the woman."

Isaac Williams comments thus: "The woman, 'made giddy,' says Chrysostom, 'by the loftiness of the sublime truths which He disclosed,' perceived that He spake of the coming-in of a new dispensation, and of things exceedingly divine which she could not comprehend: but she had been accustomed to look forward to the coming of that great Prophet, Whom Moses had spoken of, as One That should solve her difficulties; and was hoping, though a Samaritan, to be taught by Him, and accepted of Him. Unlike the Jews, she was looking in faith to Him, by Whom she was most willing to be taught of better things than she knew: and, unlike His mode of dealing with the Jews, Jesus saith unto her, I That speak unto thee am He."

Dods points out that "This declaration He was free to make among a people with whom He could not be used for political ends."

Stanton says: "I think, too, there will be felt to be something not only very beautiful, but very characteristic of our Lord, in His declaring Himself with greater plainness of speech than He had Himself hitherto done, even to the Twelve, to this dark-minded and sin-stained

woman, whose spiritual nature was just awakening to life under His Presence and His words."

The Bible Commentary says suggestively: "*I That speak*, is, rather, *I That talk*: the word suggests the notion of free, familiar conversation, which is brought out in the next verse. It was by this intercourse of loving and searching sympathy, that Christ revealed Himself as the hope of men."

First Thought.—One cannot but be astonished over and over again at the way in which our Lord is wont to grant extraordinary blessings, and to show unlooked-for favour, to souls which apparently have no especial claim to recognition on His part, rather than to those who, for their nearness to Him in discipleship, might more naturally hope for such manifestations of His goodness. We see this in the story of the penitent thief, of the Magdalene, of Zacchaeus the publican, and others. Very notably do we find it here in the case of the Samaritan woman.

Why should He have revealed to her the truth of His divinity, when it was yet hidden from His Apostles? One can only answer that it is thus He is pleased to give proof of the boundlessness of His love for His creatures, which

no human worthiness is adequate to call forth, but which He bestows freely according to His divine condescension. It is as if He would say to us, There is no reason why the least and humblest of My true followers may not hope for the most complete manifestations of My grace. It is certain, however, that if we would hope for such declarations of His bounty, there must be found in us some of the qualities of this Samaritan woman, which moved the Lord to have compassion on her.

1. There was on her part a great concern for things spiritual. She was full of the desire to hear and to believe, her mind and her heart were occupied with the things of salvation. Had we but the same eagerness to know of the things of God, to hear of that which should help us heavenward, we might well hope for larger revelations of the Master's goodness to us.

2. Again, the Samaritan woman had a simple but very complete faith in our Lord, as One on Whom she could depend to teach her the perfect way of truth. We find it very hard to submit ourselves unreservedly to the gracious leadings of our Lord. We want our own way: we question, we doubt; we do not follow Him in simple faith.

3. Once more, the Samaritan woman displayed a wonderful zeal for the saving of the souls of others, her own country-folk. As St. Chrysostom says, "She *netted* others also." This zeal for the extension of His kingdom is very dear to our Lord. Those who thus work He takes for His own especial helpers, and reveals to them things not made known to less earnest ones.

Second Thought.—The Master works no miracle to convince the woman of His divinity. He but declares Himself the promised Messiah, and she accepts His word unhesitatingly. We know by the experience of the Christian ages the fulness of the meaning of His Messiahship, yet we are very slow to accept practically the truths which grow out of it.

1. He has said plainly and simply enough that the Blessed Sacrament is His Body and Blood. We ought not to find any difficulty in accepting this truth. "I That speak unto thee am He," He seems to say. Surely, we can believe His words. We do, in a way, yet, practically, there is great unbelief concerning His Real Presence amongst us; otherwise, we should reverence and devote ourselves to the Blessed Sacrament far more than we do. So in the matter of confession. We need no miracle to

assure us that He has given power to His priests to remit and to retain sins in His name; we have His word for it. Nevertheless, there are not many among us who resort to the confessional as if they did believe in it.

2. In the affairs of every day life we display but little faith in our Lord. We ought not to need any miracle to convince us of His ever-watchful providence, of His boundless love, of His infinite wisdom. Yet we are ever cavilling at His ordering of our lives, distrusting His promises of protection, talking as if we actually doubted whether or not He cared for us. "I That speak unto thee am He."

Third Thought.—We may think of this gracious saying of our Master, not only as having reference to His formal utterances in His revelation to the Church, but also as related to His inner colloquies with souls which seek Him in the exercises of devotion. "I That *talk* with thee am He." For He does truly talk with such as have learned to understand His voiceless speech in the secret places of the spiritual life. Those who take everything to Him in prayer are amazed at the abundance and the speediness of the answers which come from Him. They are often such simple, natural answers that the half-doubting soul fan-

cies them no real answers, no more than the happenings of chance. Let us strive never to tolerate in our hearts such an unbelieving spirit, but to accept heartily and gratefully as His direct response to prayer every accomplishment of our hearts' desires.

If we would know the fulness of His speech with His faithful ones in the secret places of devotion, we must give heed to two things:

1. First, that we *invite* His answers to our petitions by frankly and unhesitatingly taking everything to Him, and submitting it, with docile spirit, to His solution.

2. Secondly, that we be ever on the alert to find, in all the circumstances of our lives, His voiceless answers coming to us in ways we had not dreamed of, yet which when they come are easily recognized as His responses to our petitions.

XXIII.

"In the meanwhile His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them My meat is to do the will of Him That sent me, and to finish His work."—St. John iv. 31-34.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams says: "The disciples asked Him this in tender concern for Him: but He was thinking of far greater matters, and wishing to explain to them His reason for conversing with the woman, and the effect His words had with her, which they were now about to witness. It was, moreover, His custom not only to give solemn benediction to God when He ate bread, but also ever to turn the mention of such bodily wants to spiritual and divine things; fulfilling always what He has enjoined us by His Apostle, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* . . . Not only did the Jews and Nicodemus, and the Samaritan woman, but His disciples also, even to the last, seem to be continually misapprehending His words, while

they thought of the literal meaning only; for by the use of figurative expressions and dark sayings He arrests their attention, and thereby leads them on to high and spiritual things. But in the meantime this talking among themselves respecting His words, while they feared to ask Him, of which so many instances occur, sets forth, in a lively manner, their reverence for Him; and may represent the state of good men at all times; inquiring with each other of the dark sayings of His word.

“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it.’ *Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work:* using words similar to those of him who is set before us as an example of patience and suffering affliction, *I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. For man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*”

St. Chrysostom comments as follows: “He here calleth the salvation of men meat, showing what an earnest desire He hath of providing for us; for as we long for food, so He, that we may be saved. And hear how in all places He revealeth, not all off-hand, but first throweth

the hearer into perplexity, in order that, having begun to see the meaning of what has been said, and then being perplexed and in difficulty, he may, when what he sought appears, receive it the more readily, and be made more attentive to listening. For wherefore said He not at once, *My meat is to do the will of my Father?* (though not even this would have been clear, but clearer than the other). But what saith He? *I have meat to eat that ye know not of;* for He desireth, as I said, first to make them more attentive through their uncertainty, and by dark sayings like these to accustom them to listen to His words."

Origen says: "Fit meat for the Son of God, Who was so obedient to the Father, that in Him was the same will that was in the Father: not two wills, but one will in both. The Son is capable of first accomplishing the whole will of the Father. . . . That is His meat in an especial sense."

Stier observes that, "Though it is said of the Lord Himself only that He rejected food, we may suppose that neither did He drink of the waterpot left there; hunger and thirst had gone from Him; and the body of the Second Adam lived and was nourished by the refreshing of the Spirit in the performance of the will of God.

. . . We almost always find in the words of our Lord that the consciousness of what is to follow pervades His reference to that which is passing. He now terms His *meat* what He will presently term His *joy*, a joy in which He will participate with His reapers; for He Himself, in His work of seeking, and calling, and sowing the seed, the first principles of the living Word, already anticipates and rejoices in the joy of the future."

And Sadler: "When the Lord sees the beginnings of faith, He sees the work of God begun, and this sustains His spirit; and as, at times, any elevation of spirit makes us forget all bodily wants, so much more with Him. He forgot His hunger in the satisfaction of His soul's most earnest desire."

First Thought.—The meat which the Master had to eat was the work of man's salvation, the restoration of the Father's creation. We know not of this practically, or we know it very imperfectly, although in theory this is the whole meaning of our Christian profession: to follow our Master, to bear our part in His work. This ought to be as *meat* to us; as a matter of fact, it is a thing we have but little stomach for, we had rather escape from working for Christ than be engaged in so doing. We know not what

blessed meat His service is; therefore we have to be learning this in our Christian experience, all through the days of our earthly sojourn. There are two senses in which Christ's service ought to be our meat.

1. First, it ought to *satisfy* the cravings of our spiritual nature, as food satisfies the hungry man. The way to find appetite for this sort of meat is to bring ourselves, by the power of the will, to regard all we have to do as work for Him: that so it may have honour and dignity in our eyes. Little by little the effort thus to serve Him grows attractive; there is ever joy in doing for those one loves, thus everything in the line of one's life duty becomes transfigured with its own measure of heavenly light. There comes to the soul the consciousness that He approves, that He delights in its labours, and that satisfies.

2. Secondly, Christ's service ought to *sustain* the soul of the believer, even as meat sustains the flesh. There are sorts of food which satisfy the appetite without nourishing the body, but these are not wholesome. The service of Christ should sustain, as well as satisfy. In the consciousness that one is working for Him there is found the realization of the fact that one is working *with* Him, and He co-

operating with our work. The realization of this brings the sense of limitless power engaged on behalf of all one has to do. One cannot but feel the sustaining force of such work.

3. It is not to be overlooked, however, that fidelity in Christ's service includes also devout and regular use of the sacraments, by which alone the power which the soul perceives to lie in the spiritual realities is actually imparted to the loyal servant of Christ.

Second Thought.—The Master says, "My meat is to do the will of Him That sent me." The doctrine seems very simple, but, as a matter of fact, nothing is much harder than this for poor human nature. We are reminded of the words wherewith our Lord met Satan in the first of His temptations. "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." For simple submission to the divine will often seems neither to satisfy, nor to sustain one. It is certain, however, that we cannot serve God in any other way, save that of His ordering for us. Therefore the supreme thought of our service should be *obedience*, the doing of His will.

1. The work which He assigns us in the circumstances of our lives is very often the work

most repugnant to us, the work we feel ourselves least of all fitted to do.

We are ever looking longingly on the vocations of others, and thinking how much better we could serve were our lot as theirs. That is not the Christ spirit.

2. Then it must never be forgotten that the most perfect service of all is that of suffering. Not by His miracles, but by His passion, our Lord saved the world. Almost always we would choose any other vocation than that of suffering; yet it is the highest of all.

Third Thought.—Our Lord's meat was not only to do His Father's will, but to *finish* His work. He looked forward to the day of the final consummation, when He should deliver up to the Father the regenerated universe, and His soul was filled with perfect joy in that vision. We need not greatly concern ourselves with the finishing of our work for Him, of doing or suffering, further than that we persevere in our efforts loyally until the hour of death. The finishing of the Father's work in us is our perfection, our complete sanctification, our attainment to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. It ought to be meat and drink to us, it ought to fire our enthusiasm, to realize that our destiny is perfect conformity to the

life of Christ, so that He shall dwell in us, and we in Him. There is rare delight in striving day by day after this high ideal; nor is there ever reason for discouragement because we seem to make but little progress, so long as we truly persevere; for it is our Master's part to finish the work begun in us for all who shall prove themselves worthy of His loving intervention on their behalf.

XXIV.

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."—St. John iv. 35, 36.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom says: "Behold, He again by familiar words leadeth them up to the consideration of greater matters; for when He spoke of *meat*, He signified nothing else than the salvation of the men who should come to Him; and again, the field and the harvest signify the very same thing, the multitude of souls prepared for the reception of the preaching; and the *eyes* of which He speaketh are those both of the mind and of the body (for they now beheld the crowd of Samaritans advancing); and the readiness of their will He calleth *fields already white*. For whereas the ears of corn when they have become white are ready for reaping, so these, He saith, are prepared and fitted for salvation."

Isaac Williams paraphrases our Lord's words thus: "I hunger indeed for the souls of men, as one that now is sowing the seed, and comforting his present need by the proverbial saying, that after four months will be the harvest: and yet it is not so altogether with me, for I have already to partake of the fruits and to satisfy my need: and though I be but as the sower, I have already to rejoice with them that reap: for behold there approach already the fruits of the seed sown. . . . And blessed are ye who shall have to gather in these fruits into the celestial barn, for *they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever*; and I also shall rejoice together with you, though now faint and hungry; for *He that now goeth on His way weeping, and bearing good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring His sheaves with Him*. He shall come again from the grave with all His saints, and rejoice together with you: *that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together*.

"And not Himself only shall return, but all those His Prophets of old, who with Him have laboured in sowing the good seed, who have laboured through the toil and heat of the day, while ye are called at the eleventh hour, in the

evening, to gather in the fruit of their labours. It is as in the transfiguration, which was a type of the resurrection, as Origen observes, Moses and Elias, who sowed the seed; and Peter and James and John, who were the reapers, rejoiced together, seeing Him, and partaking of His glory. Both together are found in Him. For He Himself, we may add, sowed with them that sow, and reaped with them that reap: as He is Himself the Lord of the harvest. It is not in things spiritual, says St. Chrysostom, as in things perishable; for in the latter, if one soweth and another reapeth, they would not both rejoice together; for he that sowed would grieve that he had lost the fruits of his labour in reaping not. But here they who reap not what they have sown, shall rejoice with them that reap, and partake of the same reward."

Stier says: "We should receive these words, and apply them to all cases in which the proverb is applicable. They will teach us, on the one hand, to wait humbly and patiently; but they will teach us, on the other, to keep the joy of harvest in our view in the midst of the toil of sowing, for our invigoration and refreshment, that so we may be able to regard every exception of swiftly-ripening blessing as a promise and type of full success."

And Lange: "Since the wages of the reaper are represented as given in this world, over against the gathering of fruit unto eternal life, the primary idea is the immediate spiritual blessings and joys of the harvesters, the joy of spiritual harvest, the communion of the converts themselves. A different and further joy is that of the carrying the fruit into heaven, to gladden there the Sower Who passed thither long before, and to have with Him a common and simultaneous rejoicing; a thing not possible in the kingdom of nature, but belonging to the kingdom of grace."

Sadler asks, "What are these wages? They are not the reward at the last day, or of the future state; but a joy here—the joy of harvest; such as St. Paul experienced when he wrote to the Thessalonians, *Ye are our glory and joy*. There can be no greater joy, to a true servant of God, than that God, through his instrumentality, either brings souls into the Church of Christ, or arouses them from the benumbing slumber of sin to see the spiritual realities of that Church or kingdom, of which they have long been nominal members, but of the glories of which they have been unconscious. . . . In the natural or temporal harvest, the sower and reaper need not rejoice together, because they

may be separated, and the grain which they gather perishes in the using. Whereas the heavenly sowing, as well as the heavenly reaping, is of that which lasts for ever; and so, in the eternal world, all the servants of God, not only those who have reaped, but those who have sown in tears, in disappointment, and opposition, and seeming failure, will see clearly what share God has given to them in carrying out His purposes respecting each soul, and will equally rejoice with him who has actually gathered it."

First Thought.—To the enthusiastic believer in Christ's religion, there are few things more discouraging than the slow spread of the Gospel throughout the world. We believe that it must prevail at last, but at the present rate of progress it will take many centuries more to convert the nations to Christ. Our Lord will not have us think so about the matter. The harvest need not be long delayed. He sees men's hearts as they truly are; He declares that they are already white to harvest. The fault is with the harvesters. We are not earnest enough about missions. Wherever there is good and loyal work done by the soldiers of the cross, without lack of faith or grudging service, the returns are always amazing. They constitute

the true romance of missions; the most unlikely fields yield the most abundant harvest of converts, as Tinnivelly and Uganda in our own time.

Many a father or mother, many a devout Christian friend, is praying for this or that one who continues in sin, and gives no sign of repentance. We think of all those whose conversion lies close to our hearts, and we are fain to grow discouraged at the apparent failure of answer to our efforts and our prayers. It must be a long time before any harvest is to be hoped for in these cases, if it come at all. Nay, God says, the fields are already white. There is needed but a little more zeal, a little more faith, a little more of true wrestling in prayer, and we shall be amazed at the speedy operation of the divine grace.

Often we grow sad at the thought of our failure in our own lives to conquer besetting temptation, to produce any good fruit for God. The harvest surely must be long delayed. Nay, says God, the fields are already white; strive a little harder, be yet more instant in prayer, and you shall find, even now, the fruit of your labour.

Second Thought.—The Master promises His faithful reapers, not only the gathering of fruit

unto life eternal, but also *wages* in this present world. Self-denying missionaries tell us there is no greater joy than that of simply working in the cause, even though one gather but small fruit of one's labour. There is rare happiness in beholding souls that once were in darkness beginning to turn their faces to the light. And then the sweet communing with God, which is the privilege of the faithful reapers, as to the ways in which they are best to do their work, and the amazing fashion in which He guides them in answer to such communing, may truly be reckoned wages such as no earthly master ever gave to labourers in his service.

We may make proof of the same thing in our labours and prayers for the souls of those personally dear to ourselves. There is no keener joy than that of seeing one or other of them turn to give up himself to Christ. Any one of us may draw such wages, if he but persevere in the effort to earn them.

In the case of the strife in our own souls to win fruit for life eternal, there is rare bliss, great peace, unspeakable gratitude, in the consciousness of the power vouchsafed from time to time to overcome some hated temptation to which one has many times yielded hitherto. The wages of God are good wages.

Third Thought.—Very inspiring is the picture of the rejoicing together of sower and reaper in the paradise of God. There is the vision of the communion of saints; the blessed ones of old time, who sowed for those who came after, prophets, and Apostles, and all their successors. How those who have already entered into the joy of their Lord delight to welcome such as are now entering, and to congratulate them upon their work for the Master! How delightful for every faithful worker of this world to watch the angel reapers at the last day gathering in the good fruit of God, and to realize that a part of that fruit, under God, is of one's own sowing. Best of all will be the rejoicing of every loyal servant, sower or reaper, in the personal meeting with his Lord, the One great Sower of all the good seed; when at last vouchsafed the happy consciousness of having been permitted to be a co-worker with Him, in that sowing, that one may lay at His feet the good fruit reaped for eternity.

XXV.

"And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."—St. John iv. 37, 38.

Exposition.—Isaac Williams comments thus: "Already, while they baptized with Christ's Baptism, more flocked unto their Baptism than unto John, who had laboured so long in the works of repentance; but he rejoiced with them that reaped, and in hearing the Bridegroom's voice. And these Samaritans that were approaching were already the first-fruits of that harvest which they should reap among the Gentiles: the patriarchs and the prophets had long since prepared them to look for the coming of the Messiah; and the testimony of the woman, who was already made radiant with the Presence of Christ, had warmed the seed sown."

Origen says: "When are the fields white to the harvest? When the Word of God comes to light up and make fruitful the fields of Scripture. Indeed, all sensible things are as it were

fields made white for the harvest, if only reason be at hand to interpret them. We lift up our eyes, and behold the whole universe overspread with the brightness of truth. . . . The seed is the whole dispensation of the mystery, now revealed, but formerly hidden in darkness; for while men were unfit for the advent of the Word, the fields were not yet white to their eyes, that is, the legal and prophetic Scriptures were shut up. Moses and the prophets, who preceded the coming of Christ, were the sowers of this seed; the Apostles, who came after Christ and saw His glory, were the reapers. They reaped and gathered into barns the deep meaning which lay hid under the prophetic writings."

And St. Chrysostom: "These words, *One soweth, and another reapeth*, the many used whenever one party had supplied toil and another had reaped the fruits; and He saith that the proverb is in this instance especially true, for the prophets laboured, and ye reap the fruits of their labours. He said not *the rewards*, for neither did their great labour go unrewarded, but *the fruits*.

"By the next words He the more encourageth them; for when it seemed a very hard matter to go through all the world and preach the Gos-

pel, He showeth them that it is even most easy. The very difficult work was that other, which required great labour: the putting in the seed, and introducing the uninitiated soul to the knowledge of God. But wherefore uttereth He these sayings? It is that when He sendeth them to preach they may not be confounded, as though sent on a difficult task. For that of the prophets, He saith, was the more difficult, and the fact witnesseth to my word that ye are come to what is easy; because as in harvest time the fruits are collected with ease, and in one moment the floor is filled with sheaves, which await not the revolutions of the seasons, and winter, and spring, and rain, so it is now. The facts proclaim it aloud. While He was in the midst of saying these things, the Samaritans came forth, and the fruit was at once gathered together."

Bengel says: "With great wisdom has God established a succession in His dispensations: in reference to the future harvest, every earlier event is a sowing. The sower and reaper are frequently the same. But the same person, by reason of the intermediate period, becomes in some degree distinct from himself. Assuredly every man is a sower in respect to his successors, and a reaper in respect to his predecessors; but

the distinction mainly contemplated in this passage is that between the ministers of the Old and New Testaments."

First Thought.—Throughout the kingdom of God on earth are to be found the ever present sowing and reaping. One life seems more taken up with the dispensing of the Word, another with the gathering in of fruits. Yet in every life both types of work for God ought to be found. We sow at one time, we reap at another. The sower's labour seems the harder, nevertheless it has its compensations; there is nothing more delightful than the sense of spreading abroad God's truth in the world, making known to men the story of His grace, providing for them opportunities of receiving His grace.

The sower finds as his reward the blessed graces of faith, and hope, and love, all developed in his soul; for there is nothing which so stimulates these celestial gifts as the effort to spread the good news of salvation among men. Faith grows like a flower expanding in the sun, as one labours in God's fields and beholds how wonderfully He responds to all our calls upon Him, to all the dependence we place in His Word. And hope developes buoyantly as one looks on into the future, and beholds the coming in of the kingdom, only to be delayed for

each soul so long as the day of its passing hence at death. So, too, love glows more and more brightly, more and more all-satisfyingly, as one realizes that in working *for* Him one works ever *with* Him; that He is ever beside the worker, holding up his hands, giving wisdom to his understanding, delighting in his fidelity. There is no joy upon earth like the joy of consciously working along with our Lord.

The reaper has for his soul's stay the blessed gift of gratitude. There is nothing sweeter than this, the overmastering sense of God's infinite goodness to one. As one gathers in the mercies, day by day, and surveys their amazing multitude, the wealth of the harvest of God's good things which one has in the faith, in the sacraments, in prayer, in the Church's worship, in the communion of saints, one's heart is fairly melted through the consciousness of the infinity of the divine bounty. It is good, then, to be a sower, it is good to be a reaper; whether He call us to sow, or to reap, let us bless God for our vocations.

Second Thought.—The Master says to His followers: *I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour.* We often lose sight of this. Our whole Christian environment of these days is the fruit of the labour of those who have gone

before us. With what toils did the first missionaries convert the nations! How often they had to surrender their lives before the battle could be won! They conquered only by becoming martyrs. What struggles had to be passed through by the Church before we had our blessed faith securely established for us as it is now in the creeds, and in the Catholic tradition of Christendom! The Church now has her assured place in the community, honoured by most, respected outwardly by all. We serve God as we will without fear, no one calls in question our faith, no one interferes with our worship. Truly, we reap a rich harvest, for which we have not laboured.

But what sort of harvest are we gathering in for God, we who thus rejoice in what others have done for us?

1. It ought not to be hard to win souls for Christ now, with all the helps we have in the work; the multitude of wisely written and able books, the attractive ways of the Church, the manifest excellence of much of her charitable work. We have all manner of convincing arguments ready to hand: better than that, we have the Church's agencies of grace, and all the wealth of her prayers, at our disposal in the cause. How little labour is required of us for

reaping in these days! Are we bringing in any harvest of souls for God in return for all our possibilities of so doing?

Are we, indeed, showing any harvest fruits ripening in our own souls; we, over whom so many others have laboured: parents, with teachings and prayers and tears, and their careful leading of us to the sacraments; teachers, with their patient efforts to make us know and believe; pastors, on whose hearts our soul's welfare has long lain; friends and devout companions, who have prayed for our salvation; bright angels and holy saints in heaven; the dear Lord Himself, and the gracious Spirit. Other men laboured for us, and we are entered into their labours—to what profit?

Third Thought.—It is the law of the kingdom that, as we have entered into the labours of those who have gone before us, so we should take up those labours, and carry them forward. The work is not yet done. We are to remember with confidence and delight that which holy men of God wrought in olden time for His glory, and to find in it mighty provision for our own labours.

1. Their work is the sure foundation for ours. We rest upon a rock, secure indeed in the faith and patience of the saints of old.

2. Their work is our armoury, the well-stored treasure house out of which we fetch all things now necessary wherewith to fight the good fight of faith.

3. Their work is our inspiration. Their examples ever remain to encourage us, to shame our weakness and indifference. Their successes are but prophecies of what we may do for God if we work as they did in His grace, by His Spirit. Their passing on into heaven is the sure promise of the blessed reward which awaits us, if we but strive to be faithful as they were faithful.

XXVI.

"So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way."—St. John iv. 46-50.

Exposition.—St. Chrysostom says: "Yet the very coming and beseeching Him was a mark of faith. And besides, after this the Evangelist witnesses to him, declaring that when Jesus said, *Go, thy son liveth*, he believed His word, and went. What, then, is that which He saith here? Either He uses the words as approving of the Samaritans because they believed without signs; or to touch Capernaum which was thought to be His own city, and of which this person was. Moreover, another man in

Luke, who says, *Lord, I believe*, said besides, *help Thou mine unbelief*. And so if this ruler also believed, yet he believed not entirely or soundly, as is clear from his enquiring *at what hour the fever left him*, since he desired to know whether it did so of its own accord, or at the bidding of Christ. When therefore he knew that it was *yesterday at the seventh hour*, then *himself believed and his whole house*. Seest thou that he believed when his servants, not when Christ, spake? Therefore He rebuketh the state of mind with which he had come to Him, and spoken as he did (thus, too, He the more drew him on to belief), because that before the miracle he had not believed strongly. That he came and entreated was nothing wonderful, for parents in their great affection are also wont to resort, not only to physicians in whom they have confidence, but also to talk with those in whom they have no confidence, desiring to omit nothing whatever. Indeed, that he came without any strong purpose appears from this, that when Christ was come into Galilee, then he saw Him; whereas, if he had firmly believed in Him, he would not, when his child was on the point of death, have hesitated to go into Judæa."

St. Gregory says: "Remember what he asked for, and you will plainly see that he doubted.

He asked Him to come down and heal his son. His faith was deficient in that he thought our Lord could not save, except He were personally present."

Isaac Williams also: "Here are two circumstances worthy of remark: first, that our Lord, instead of receiving the request with approbation, appears to speak with some complaint, as if the mode of entreaty indicated a want of faith; secondly, that He did not as usual grant the exact request by going down to the place, as He did in other cases, and in one very similar to this, when the ruler Jairus asked Him to come and lay His hand on his daughter, who was at the point of death; but here He exerts a greater power than is asked for, by healing at a distance, when He is asked to come down. But it may be that there is a great variety in our Lord's dealings with men, although one uniform character may be seen throughout; as, for instance, when He requires one to follow Him without returning to bid adieu to his family, and declines the proffered attendance of another altogether; and it is evident that in all these cases He was dealing with the heart of each, as He read their secret thoughts and characters, rather than their words."

Of the *signs and wonders*, the Bible Com-

mentary says: "They severally mark the two chief aspects of miracles: the spiritual aspect, whereby they suggest some deeper truth than meets the eye, of which they are in some sense symbols and pledges; and the external aspect, whereby their strangeness arrests attention."

Bengel notes that the reply of our Lord to the nobleman, "which in some measure resembles a repulse, at the same time involving a promise of help, coincides with the feelings of the suppliant, which include faith and weakness."

And Quesnel: "Note then a double miracle wrought by this word of Jesus on the distant body of the son, and on the invisible heart of the father."

First Thought.—The nobleman's son, who was sick, and at the point of death, may represent spiritually that inner Christ-life of the soul, which was imparted to us at our baptism, and which it is our vocation to cherish and to nourish up into everlasting blessedness. It is fed by Holy Communion, it has for its medicine the sacrament of Penance. We ought to be greatly concerned about this Christ-life within us, for it is all-important, and should be dearer to us than an only son to his father. The watchful soul finds its precious charge sick. It is

not indeed the sickness of sin, for then one might resort to the confessional and be healed. But it is a wasting away, a spiritual deadness and torpor which seems to be creeping over all that ought to be best and holiest in our hearts; there is no sense of vision, no faith, no spiritual joy. The soul fears that it is losing its baptismal grace, the Christ-life in it is dying. What shall be done?

The only thing is to appeal to the gracious Master to interpose, to beseech Him to come down and heal our spiritual being. But then, He is so far away, His presence goes not with us; prayer seems such a vague, fruitless sort of thing; sacramental grace has lost its power. The soul craves some direct intervention on our Lord's part; something which shall afford it clear evidence that His life-giving power has not failed it. In olden time men were vouchsafed signs and wonders; God gave plain demonstration of His presence, He worked miracles. If one beseech the Master for something of this sort now, will He not grant it?

Second Thought.—But to this nobleman of Capernaum He replied, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." It is a rebuke to us, for in these Christian days we ought to be content with His word.

1. We, in our hearts, insist upon *signs*. If we be faithful to Him, if the Christ-life is energizing within us, then we ought to find tokens of the divine favour and appreciation along the line of our earthly pilgrimage. Yet there are no smiles of heaven upon us which we can detect. Troubles come thick and fast upon us, temporal conditions grow ever harder, we seem indeed to be but the sport of fate, deserted by God. Have we not, however, misconceived Christ's service, when we permit ourselves to think so about it? Has He not, over and over again, told us that the proof of His interest and care for us is *adversity*, not *prosperity*? "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Are we not expressly told that we must *through much tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God? In reality, you perceive, we have evidence of the Saviour's love and care for us, in the very things which our blind eyes are wont to look upon as the opposite.

2. So with the *wonders*. We are sure that God ought to answer our prayers, yet we insist that He does not. Is not to speak thus to give the lie to His express word? Does He not most plainly declare, over and over again, that He always answers prayer, that no right prayer is

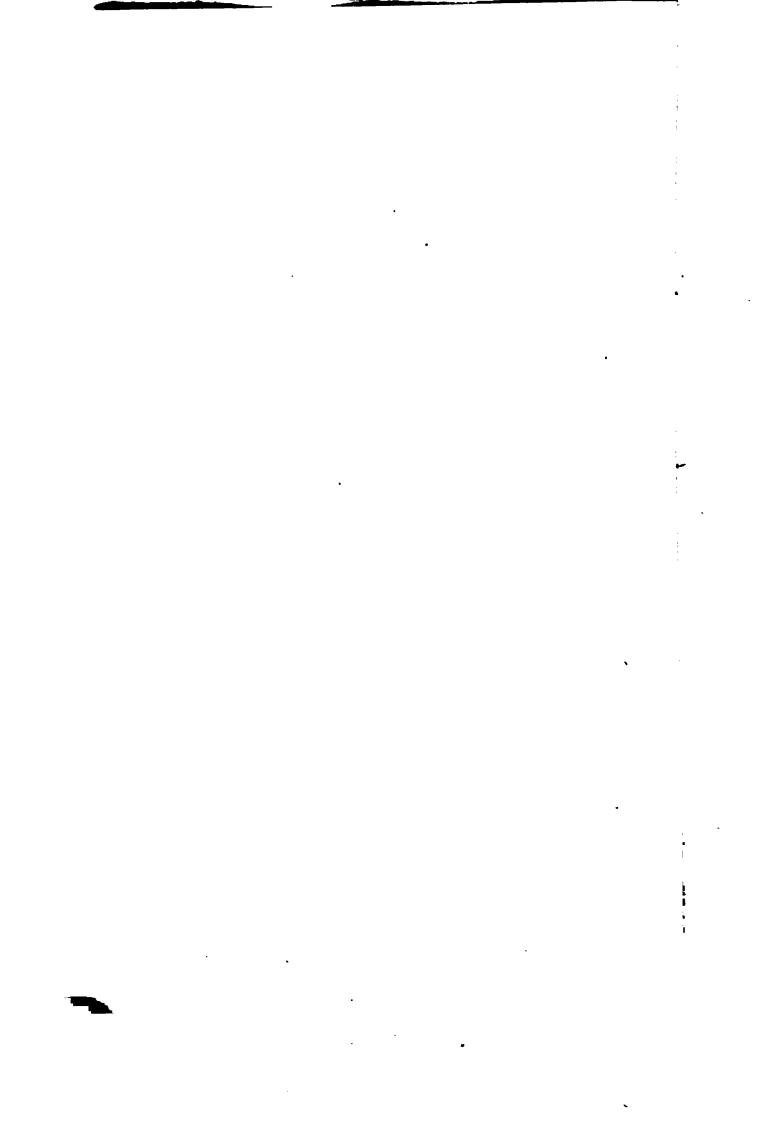
ever unheeded by Him? But we cannot *see* that He answers. Are we, then, to declare His word false because our sight is too feeble to see *how* it is true? That is the height of unbelief in the Christian. "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe."

Third Thought.—The Master's words of dismissal to the nobleman were a call to a larger faith. He did not go down with him, He sent him away with only the saying, "Thy son liveth." Very often it is so in the experience of the believer to-day. His piteous cry for some sign of the divine favour, for some wonder in evidence of the answering of his prayers, is not vouchsafed him. He must go on in his isolation, apparently unaccompanied by the Master, resting wholly upon the word "Thy son liveth," the Christ-life in thee is not dead, thy faith has restored it to the fulness of its vigour and power.

For this saying is ever uttered for all who loyally persevere in the practices of devout living. It was at the seventh hour of the day that the Master's word was spoken—one o'clock in the afternoon, as we should say—and the father was more than twenty miles from his home. He could not have demonstration of the Lord's word until the next day. It may be that all through

the night of our earthly sojourn we shall have to go on without any clear sense of the development of our spiritual nature, of the vitality of the Christ-life within us, only staying our hearts upon His word, "Thy son liveth"; nevertheless, the morning shall dawn at last, and the servants, the holy angels, shall meet the redeemed one in the land of peace, with the assurance of his everlasting salvation.





RITCHIE, Arthur
Spiritual studies in St.
John's Gospel.

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